OLIVER CABOT

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THE MAN WITHOUT A SHADOW

"I found myself standing face to face with Virginia."

[Page 132.]

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THE MAN WITHOUT A SHADOW

BY

OLIVER CABOT

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK
GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS

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Published April, 1909

"*I seek myself and am but myself a shadow.*"

—"The Pilgrim," FLETCHER.

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EDITORIAL FROM THE NEW YORK PLANET

The control of one of the most important single industrial organizations in this country will pass within the next day or two into the hands of a young man in his early twenties. So far as is generally known, he will take up this heavy responsibility with no better equipment for it than is afforded by a large paternal allowance and a dilettante's pursuit of the fine arts in France.

The industry in question is the great shipbuilding yard of the Morton Duggleby Company at Cleveport, N. J. The practical direction of this company has been for many years in the hands of its second largest stockholder, Mr. Thomas Duggleby, the late Christopher Morton, the holder of the controlling interest, having been for some time inactive.

Under the terms of the will, his entire property goes with no restrictions whatever to his son, the present Christopher Morton. The property in question is worth more than a score of millions, and the wisdom and skill with which it is managed is a matter of national concern.

After the lapse of four decades, the business of building ships and the flying of the American flag on all the seven seas of the world again bids fair to revive the glorious tradition of the last century. Consequently, it is not an impertinent intrusion into his private affairs to warn young Mr. Morton of the heavy responsibility that rests upon him.

This property is in good hands to-day; certainly in stronger and more successful hands than his own. A large part of his inheritance is of a sort that cannot be expressed between a dollar sign and a decimal point. He has inherited a name which deserves a large and honorable place in our history among the captains of peace.

If he shall prove negligent of this inheritance and shall allow his own caprice to usurp a better-grounded authority, he will have added an argument of no light weight against the unrestricted transference of property by bequest.

THE MAN WITHOUT A SHADOW

CHAPTER I

THE AWAKENING

AFTER a glance about me, I turned to the man who was seated at the other end of the bench. He was dozing in the warm June sun, his pipe dangling from his relaxed jaw.

"I beg your pardon," said I. "May I ask you to tell me where I am?"

I am a man apparently about thirty years old, though it may be that I am younger than I look, *but the moment in which I cast that glance around and asked the question of the other occupant of my bench, is my earliest conscious memory.*

Back of that, except for some hazy, dreamlike pictures, is an absolute void. I shall speak of those pictures in detail presently. They are all I have that afford any hope of success in the vast and almost impossible task which lies before me; all that supply any incentive for attempting the task at all.

I know that some time, perhaps a month, perhaps a year ago—possibly longer than that—a man was lost. A man of education, certainly, and, I am inclined to think, a man who occupied no unimportant niche in the world's affairs. That man lived in my body, thought with my mind, was actually myself. It is my task to find him.

I feel, as I write this, like one who builds a house of cards, which a breath or the brush of a careless sleeve may bring to utter wreck. I mean to commit to paper these memories of the past few days and also those pictures, which I hardly dare call memories, in order to have them safe, in case the obliterating hand which has once before passed over the tablets of my mind shall come my way again.

I said my task was almost impossible. That statement may have a strange sound. Surely, one would say, I must have friends eager to welcome me back to my old place. It may be. I have found none yet, and I have found enemies—or an enemy, for the web around me seems to have been woven by one master mind. If so, he will have taken care that no friendly hand shall ever be stretched out to my rescue.

If ever I escape from this cell into which malign chance has delivered me, this cell of utter hopeless oblivion, it will be through my own efforts;

through the shrewdness, courage, and, above all, the patience which I may be able to command in my own behalf.

And why do I do it at all? Why do I—the most helpless waif in all the world—persist in a campaign so nearly hopeless, so full, as the adventures of the past few days have already too clearly shown, of dangers and discouragements? Well, my pictures, my dream pictures—I hardly dare call them more than that—are responsible. For among them is a woman, one of the loveliest, I verily believe her to be, of all the world. I see her in a hundred different ways, each one more charming, more alluring than the others; and when her eyes turn toward me, as again and again they do, there is love in them. To find those eyes, not in my own dim dreams, but somewhere out in God's bright day, I will search the world.

Now I will tell my story.

My question aroused the man on my bench from his doze, but I had to repeat it before he caught its import.

"Can you tell me where I am?" said I.

His pipe clattered on the brick-paved path. He straightened up in a flash and looked at me astonished. To give him time to gather his wits, I went on talking.

"I suppose I must have been unconscious. Or

was it worse than that? Mad, perhaps? If that's the case, this building is an asylum, I suppose. But have I been here long?"

"I can't tell you anything about that," said the man; "I am just a guard. I—I'll go and call the doctor."

I reflected that it could hardly be so very unusual that even the maddest patient should enjoy an interval of sudden lucidity. This consideration made the guard's excitement rather hard to account for. Astonishment was hardly the word to describe the man's emotion, either. It seemed, now I reflected on it, more like a sort of vicarious alarm. He had bolted around the corner of the building without another word to me.

I rose from my bench, walked two or three paces, stretched my arms and looked myself over.

I was well dressed; there was no suggestion of a uniform about my clothes and no restriction on my moving about freely. Evidently I had been well taken care of. I raised my hand to my face, and somewhat to my surprise found a beard there. That was all I could determine about myself for the moment, so I walked a few paces down the path and turned back to look at the building against whose sunny wall we had been sitting.

It gave me, contrary to my expectations, a little momentary feeling of pleasure. It was small,

one of a group arranged in quadrangular form, and of a homelike architecture. If it were an asylum, and so much my guard seemed to have admitted, it was clearly no public institution, but a private affair, and I might be sure that the maintenance of every one of the inmates was handsomely paid for.

That conclusion might well have given me grounds for uneasiness, but for the moment it did not. My mind was taken up with the fact that I had no idea who had been paying for me. In that moment I made my first attempt to recover, out of the past, my own identity. My failure did not, just then, greatly alarm me. I was perfectly sane again; of that I felt sure; and the recovery of my memory could only be a matter of hours, possibly moments.

My reflections were interrupted by the return of the guard, evidently in disgrace for having left me to myself, even for so short a time, and vastly relieved to find me standing intact before him.

He was accompanied by another man, an authoritative-looking person whom I took to be the doctor he had gone to seek.

His face, like the guard's, was totally unfamiliar to me, though he had very likely been in constant attendance on me for a long while. I bowed to him.

"Good morning," said I, and then I smiled a little, "or should I say 'good afternoon'? I have no idea which it is. You are a doctor?"

He bowed in assent. "Berry is my name," he said.

"I seem to have astonished your guard somewhat by asking him where I was," I went on, "for he ran off post haste to find you, without stopping to answer me."

After my first glance at him I had allowed my eyes to wander from his face to the attractive stretch of well-kept lawn which lay behind him, and I did not meet his eye again till I had finished speaking. When I did, I found a look there which concentrated all my faculties at once upon the man himself.

It was gone in a second, but while it lasted it expressed more plainly than my words can express it, the state of mind of a man alarmed and casting about, desperately, for means to meet an utterly unforeseen contingency; but his face was composed into a look of mere solicitude for my welfare before he spoke.

"I would not trouble about that, if I were you," said he. "There is nothing in the world for you to worry about. Look at the sky instead, and see what a day it is. Did you ever see anything finer than the young green on those trees yonder?"

"I share your enthusiasm for the day," said I, "and I am not in the least worried, but I am intensely curious. I will waive the question of where I am, if you're afraid the answer would disturb me, but I would like an answer to another that's a good deal more important. That question is, *Who* am I? My memory for the moment seems to be playing tricks with me."

This time I looked at him while I spoke, keen to get what answer I could from his look as well as from his words. A man less alert than I—a blind man—might have understood the effect of my question upon him. He simply gasped with relief, and there flickered in his eye an evil look of perfectly ruthless joy.

"I can answer that question," he said. He was trying to keep a quiver of eagerness out of his voice, but not succeeding very well. "You are a —a house painter," he said, "a sort of odd-job man, employed by the owner of one of the large country estates in this vicinity. You had an accident. A piece of staging gave way, and you fell on your head, and have been in a state of only semiconsciousness since. We were afraid that the only hope for your recovery lay in a serious surgical operation which would endanger your life. The owner of the estate, your employer, a Mr.—a—Thompson—does the name bring anything

back, by the way?—sent you here to be under our observation so that we might decide whether an operation were necessary or not. Do you remember it at all now? Does nothing come back to you?"

My first impulse was to laugh in his face. The man was not only lying, he was lying clumsily, desperately; for a second I was very near betraying the fact that I knew it.

Then, as suddenly as though a warning finger had been laid on my lips, I realized a little of the true peril of my position, realized that I could not afford to waste a single card in the game I found myself called upon to play.

"This sun is a little hot," I said vaguely. "I don't think I want to talk any more now. May I go to my room?"

CHAPTER II

THE CORDS TIGHTEN

ACTING in the character of a man relapsing into a stupor, I turned abruptly away from them, and blundering a little in my walk, set out for the nearest building. My guard would have been at my side in an instant had not the doctor detained him with an imperative signal. I heard, as I walked away, the low murmur of voices, that of the doctor betraying, though I could not hear the words, a note of exasperation at the guard's slowness in understanding his instructions.

Presently, however, the man overtook me, and, guiding me by the elbow, turned me into the entrance of the building I had set out for.

The broad entrance hall with its polished floor and graceful stairway contained as little to suggest the purpose to which the building was put as the exterior of it did. I caught a glimpse through a doorway of a number of well-dressed people reading, and heard educated voices carrying on what seemed to me like perfectly normal, casual

conversation. Evidently the place was a sanitarium rather than an asylum in the strict sense of the word.

The guard led me up the stairs. At the head of the first flight, obedient to an instinct of which I was perfectly unconscious, I hesitated, almost stopped, in fact, before a doorway.

"Not there," the guard said sharply; "that ain't where you go."

In a flash I realized that my instinct had been a true one. I had stopped at the door of what had been, up to this time, my room. Affecting not to hear the guard, I opened the door, entered, and blundered into the nearest chair. I knew, of course, that I should not be allowed to stay there, but I was curious to see in what sort of style I had lived before the doctor had converted me, on the spur of the moment, into a house painter and odd-job man on a near-by estate.

The room was spacious, luxurious in its appointments, and I caught a glimpse of a white-tiled bathroom opening from it. That was all I had time to see, for the guard pulled me abruptly to my feet.

"Didn't you hear me tell you not to go in there?" he demanded.

I only wagged my head stupidly, and went with him quietly enough. He conducted me up two

more flights of stairs, quite to the top of the building, where, opening a door, he thrust me unceremoniously into a little cubicle of a room, made up largely of a dormer window which looked down upon the eaves.

The room was shabby and none too clean, and I judged that it was usually occupied by one of the servants. The guard seemed nervous lest I should make an attempt to draw him into conversation, and got out of the room as quickly as he could, locking the door after him.

There was nothing in the place to warrant examination. I opened a closet door and found it bare; so I went to the window and looked out.

The first thing I saw was interesting enough; two men on a hanging stage were busily at work painting the side of the next building. They had been working under the doctor's eye when my guard had rushed up to inform him of my return to consciousness. They had furnished him with a hint for the lie he had told me, and were, I reflected with a smile, the unconscious and innocent cause of the sudden change in my own estate. The story of the house painter and odd-job man was going to be lived up to.

My eye traveled past the edge of the building and over the broad sweep of rolling lawn and shrubbery to where the woods began. Presently,

getting my eyes focused to the distance, I made out in a gap between the trees what I was sure was the boundary wall of the property. It was hard to judge its height from the distance, but I had no doubt it was high enough to make scaling it a difficult or, perhaps, impossible feat, except for an athlete.

I caught myself smiling there over the question in my mind, whether I was an athlete or not. When I went to bed to-night I would know more about that.

The wall had not yet lost its interest for me, however. Looking at it closely, I was sure that I made out a fine veil of dust rising above it, which was accounted for on the next favoring slant of the wind by the steady thrum of a motor car. On the other side of the wall, then, lay a highway. That discovery might possibly prove important.

I was to find out one thing more before I left that window. It came the next moment, and again it was the breeze that brought it to me—the long-drawn, melodious chime of the sort of whistle that is carried by our great racing passenger locomotives. The train was whistling for a stop, and was going to stop not more than a mile or two away.

Instinctively I felt for my watch, but there was nothing of the sort in my pocket. I was disap-

pointed, for though only half conscious of the reason why, I wanted to know what time that train came in. Suddenly an expedient occurred to me. The sun was slanting through my window at an acute angle with the casement. With my thumb nail I scratched on the sill the outline of the shadow.

Some one was standing outside my door, watching me, no doubt, through the keyhole. An involuntary movement of his feet betrayed so much to me, and a moment later, restless of espionage, I crossed over to the farther corner of the room.

In doing so I caught a glimpse of another movement, and looking up I saw what I wonder I had not thought of looking for earlier—a mirror. The sight of it made my heart beat quickly.

"Of course," I thought, "that is all it needs. A glance at myself will bring my memory back to me."

I walked around and stood before the glass. But the face I saw was absolutely strange to me, as strange as the doctor's face or the guard's had been. It was bewildering, uncanny, almost enough indeed to drive a man mad, to see the haggard look of pain and disappointment and something not far from terror in that stranger's face; and to realize that it was only the irrepressible emotion of my own soul that I saw reflected there.

Then, like a touch of the spur, rallying all my courage anew, there came the faint sound of a chuckling laugh from the other side of the door. In standing before the mirror I had again come under the observation of the man at the keyhole. The same bewildered, disappointed face which I had seen, he had seen, too.

I dropped down on the edge of my bed and buried my face in my hands. I heard footsteps tiptoeing away from my door, and then in a moment, as I half expected, returning noisily.

"Come in," said I, in answer to the knock.

It was the doctor, but this time the doctor with his manner all prepared. It was at once good-humored and patronizing.

"Well, my good man," said he, "I hope you feel no further ill effects from that warm June sun."

"No," said I, "I guess I'm right enough."

Then, by way of experiment, I shot a quick question at him.

"Is this my room, the room I have lived in right along?"

His face seemed to stiffen a little in its false mask of kindly humor.

"Of course," he said; "but you must not expect to remember anything about that. You have been, as I said before, only half conscious since

you came here. It would be altogether extraordinary if you were to recognize the room or the building or any of our faces. But does nothing come back from beyond that time; nothing that happened before your accident?"

I shook my head dully.

"What did you tell me I was?" I asked.

I dared not look at him, but I was aware that he was uneasily balancing the probability of my having forgotten his clumsy lie of the morning, and the wisdom of taking this chance to tell me a better one. He decided against it, however.

"You were a man who did odd jobs; a house painter by trade, I believe."

"I saw some men painting from my window," I commented rather vacuously, but I glanced at him quickly enough to see in his face that he recognized a blunder in having put me in a room that overlooked these operations.

"Did you tell me my name?" I asked.

He was ready with one; he did not say "Smith."

"Andrew Meiklejohn." Then he added—and I could have throttled him for the sneer which I heard underlying his friendly, solicitous words—"Does that bring nothing back?"

I simply shook my head.

"And is there nothing in your mind at all; no

memory that seems like a dream? Nothing that you can tell me?"

His voice was eager as he asked the question.

This time I made no answer, even by a sign. I just sat on the edge of the bed, my head drooping in sullen silence.

"Well, well, my good fellow," he said, rising from his chair, "you must not be downhearted. The moment any memory does come to you, send for me. I will do all I can to help you."

Then I did a foolish thing. I allowed my anger for the moment to get the better of me.

"Then I am to stay here," I said, "until I can remember that my name is Andrew Meiklejohn, and that I used to be a house painter?"

There was a cutting edge of satire in my voice. It roused his quick suspicion like the flick of a whip. I would have given much to unsay the words, but it was too late. He gave me a venomous smile.

"Oh, don't be discouraged," he said, "and, above all, don't lose sleep and appetite over it. I will see you again to-morrow." With that he left me abruptly.

He left me very nearly in despair. What did it matter after all, that he had lied clumsily? The cards were all in his hands. He had no need for *finesse*. If I were to express disbelief in the precious tale he had told me, it would simply be tol-

erated as the natural delusion of a madman. If I remonstrated at his keeping me there, if I made the faintest hint of resistance, there was, no doubt, a strait-jacket on the premises which they could rely on to bring me to terms.

And as for a chance of escape: I went to the window and tried to open it. The sash rose a scant six inches, and there was checked by a cunningly contrived lock. There was a guard outside my door. He was tramping up and down the corridor quite frankly, like a sentry on a beat.

Even supposing myself safely over the wall and on the highway, what chance had an absolutely penniless man, who knew neither who he was nor where he was, nor the name of one friend in all the world, what chance had he to remain more than a single night at liberty?

The sun was getting low when a faint clatter of dishes and a knock at the door announced supper. It was brought to me on a tray, daintily served, and was an appetizing repast.

"Well," thought I, "the doctor gave me one good piece of advice, anyway. I'll eat and I'll sleep; I'll keep my health and I'll do the best I can with my spirits."

For just a flicker there passed through my mind the notion that it was somewhat curious that the meal should show no traces of my recent fall to

the estate of house painter. To match the room, it should have been served on thick dishes, and should not have comprised half the variety that was here offered to me. But the thought went away as quickly as it came, possibly because I was really hungry, and I settled to my meal with the expectation of enjoying it.

I was half through, when something brought that disquieting notion back to me. There seemed to be an odd taste to everything I had eaten. It was no taste that I recognized. Everything was perfectly cooked, but certainly every single article on that tray had a faint suggestion of that same curious flavor.

And then my knife and fork dropped with a clatter from my nerveless hands. I knew now why I had not suddenly been reduced to the coarse fare of a laborer. I knew why the doctor had advised me to eat. The food was drugged.

CHAPTER III

THE AMBUSH

THE opium—for it was this drug I have no doubt that had been put into my food—had one effect which the doctor can hardly have anticipated. To a certain extent it acted upon my memory, as a developer acts upon an exposed plate.

My dreams, from the time when I lost consciousness over the supper tray until I awakened in bed early the next morning, were far more vivid than any I had any recollection of. They did not tell me who I was, to be sure, but they gave me two or three pictures so minutely outlined, that I am sure I shall recognize them if ever I can get the chance. The consolation of that thought, however, did not come to me till afterwards.

When, with difficulty, I had roused myself from my heavy sleep and was able intelligently to take account of my present situation, it seemed a thousandfold more desperate than it had the day before. They had come into my room, once they

had found me safe asleep, stripped me and put me to bed. This morning my clothes were gone. That fact alone was enough to make the hope of escape absolutely insane.

The plot was clear enough. They would keep me here in solitary confinement, persistently drugging my food, until hunger compelled me to eat it; until I had established an appetite for the drug itself; until at last I should be utterly and hopelessly mad indeed.

Well, I would fight off despair as long as I could. So much I solemnly promised myself.

A dash of cold water out of the ewer, and a few deep breaths of the young June air which came in my partly opened window, revived me. Then, more to provide myself with an occupation than in any hope of gaining anything by it, I began a most minute examination of the room. Not a corner of it escaped me. A rickety little table stood in the dormer, and I remarked what I had failed to observe on the previous afternoon; it contained a drawer. I pulled it open half-heartedly. Then seeing what it contained, I stood quickly erect.

Hope was thrilling in my veins again. I saw a way of escape opening up before me.

What was this great discovery that, in an instant, had served to change the face of the world?

Pathetically trivial it may seem. Nothing but a well-gnawed stub of a pencil and a few soiled sheets of pink and highly perfumed note paper. They had become too soiled and shabby for the housemaid, who had occupied the room before me, to think it worth while to take them away with her.

I did not have to cast about to find a use to which this unexpected treasure-trove could be put; it came to me complete in the half second between the opening and shutting of that drawer. But I went back to bed, and for an hour I tested my plan by every contingency I could think of.

When they knocked at the door with my breakfast, I was ready. I did not answer the knock. When the man entered with my tray, I glowered at him and roughly ordered him to be off.

"Take that stuff away," said I, "if you don't want me to pitch it out of the window."

He seemed rather nonplused at this development, but after a moment of hesitation, obeyed me. I heard him tramping off down the corridor, and knew with perfect certainty that inside of five minutes I should hear Dr. Berry's quiet, catlike tread coming to take up his post of observation outside my keyhole. That was what I wanted.

I let him wait a while. Then furtively, and as silently as possible, I went over to my table, took

the paper from the drawer, drew up a chair and settled down to write. It was a mere tissue of nonsense with which I covered sheet after sheet of that soiled, perfumed paper. I worked slowly, apparently with the greatest labor, for I meant not to finish until the sun was within an hour of where it had been yesterday when I had outlined the shadow of the casement on the sill with my thumb nail.

The excitement mounted higher and higher in my veins as the time passed. It was hard to wait; hard not to risk throwing my great chance away, out of sheer impatience, by putting my plan to the test too soon.

My greatest fear was lest the doctor should leave his post of observation, but I had calculated rightly. He had too much at stake to take any chances.

At last the hour had come. I rose from the table, looked suspiciously all about and listened. Then rolling my precious manuscript into the smallest compass possible, I went over to the bed with it. I turned up the mattress. The ticking was none too strong and my fingers were not to be denied. I had no difficulty in tearing a small hole in the underside of the mattress. Then, as if in a panic of fear lest I be interrupted too soon, I thrust the manuscript through the hole, put the bed

to rights, crawled back into it and pretended to fall asleep.

Almost immediately I heard the catlike footfalls receding down the corridor, only to return again frankly and noisily. Dr. Berry entered without waiting for my invitation; indeed, I gave none. He was radiating benign good humor from every pore.

"What," he said, "in bed at this time of day? It is much too fine for that. You ought to be up and stirring, walking about the grounds."

I replied sulkily that I didn't want to. His eye lighted up a little at that, and I knew I had him fairly hooked.

"Come," he said brusquely, "no nonsense now."

And then he called an order to the guard who stood in the corridor, that he should bring my clothes. When he came with them—and I noticed with joy that they were the same clothes that I had worn yesterday—I sulkily acquiesced in the doctor's orders, and began to dress myself.

I protested against his staying in the room while I did it, however. I said I didn't need any help, and would let them know when I was ready. He sent the guard away with some whispered instructions, whose purport I was to understand later, but himself remained in the room.

"Now, off with you," said Dr. Berry good-humoredly, when my hasty toilet was completed, and he called to the guard.

"Show him all about the place. Don't bring him back for an hour. This air will be just the thing for him."

Once outside the building with the guard at my elbow, I paused for just an instant and sent up an unspoken prayer of thanksgiving. I was clad again, and I was out under the blue sky; and on the other side of that distant wall ran a highway that led to freedom.

Up in my little cell, under the eaves, the doctor was already engrossed with my laboriously scrawled "revelations." They would keep him busy for an hour at least; for the hour that I needed.

I turned to my guard and smiled a little. He was a burly, low-browed brute, with "thug" written large all over him; but that did not distress me. It was man to man between us.

He made no objection when I set out briskly across the lawn in the direction of the wood and the place where I knew the wall was. I noticed, though, that every minute or two he cast a cautious glance behind him. I dared not look, but looking was unnecessary. It could not have been apprehension that made him look back. After a

moment's thought the explanation occurred to me. He was keeping an eye on his reserves. The doctor's instructions had, no doubt, been that a second man should follow us to give aid to my companion, or to run and spread the alarm, as circumstances might indicate, in case I should prove obstreperous.

The conclusion did not seriously disturb me. In my present state of exalted confidence, two men were hardly more seriously to be feared than one. What was essential to my plan was that the reserves should be drawn in. The second man must run to his comrade's aid, and not to headquarters, to give the alarm. It would take a little maneuvering, but I felt sure that I could do it.

Walking briskly, and not attempting to disguise the fact that I was evidently going somewhere, with a purpose, I entered the woods which grew alongside the wall. Then, instead of proceeding straight toward the wall itself, I deflected the course to a long diagonal.

I saw my guard give a little, almost imperceptible jerk of his head. He was signaling to the man behind to pass us on the outside and to close in a little ahead. I slackened my pace, as was natural, among the timber.

My guard was very alert and quite unable to disguise his suspicion that I was about to make an

attempt to escape. Secure in the knowledge that his partner was just ahead of us, he fell a pace or two behind me, partly in hope of encouraging me to make my dash straight into the ambush the other man had laid for me, partly to prevent my whirling about and trying to make off in the opposite direction.

For the second time I paused, turned, and looked quite frankly at my guard, and smiled a little. I doubt somewhat if I shall ever again experience so keen a thrill of exactly that sort of joy. I had a difficult thing to do, and I knew I should be able to do it.

I was meeting them at their own game. There is no doubt in the world that both of them were hoping that I would make exactly the attempt I planned. It would afford an excuse, if I were captured, to beat me insensible and put me in handcuffs or a strait-jacket. Unless I was greatly mistaken, my guard's free hand, half closed, was holding the leather-covered, leaden knob of a black-jack. And certainly there was something hard in his side pocket that clanked when I brushed against it.

I decidedly welcomed this state of affairs. It would have been hard to attack a kindly disposed and unsuspecting man, even for the purpose of gaining my liberty.

Again I started on, affected to stumble on a root, and went sprawling forward. That ruse gave me just the added distance I needed from the man behind. In a flash I was on my feet again and rushing straight toward the other man, who, in the concealment of a clump of bushes, was waiting for me.

When he sprang from his hiding place and confronted me, armed with a heavy bludgeon, I stopped short, just out of striking distance, and stood gazing, as if stupefied, straight into his face.

The other guard was coming up from behind. Well, that was what I meant him to do. I waited, waited, perhaps, three interminable seconds, until my ears told me that the man who was stealing up behind had come close enough.

The guard who, behind my defenseless back, thought he had me at his mercy, had never heard of the terrible "turning-kick" of the French boxers. Whirling half around on one foot, the whole weight of my body and the momentum of my spring behind it, I sent my heavily shod heel crashing against the side of his head. He went down like a ninepin.

That accounted for one; I had still to deal with the other.

The terror in this man's face hinted flight, and I could afford to take no chance of that. He was

strong and big, and there was something to be dreaded from his cudgel, no doubt, but once I could get inside the sweep of it, I knew I should be safe enough.

I moved quietly toward him, came near enough to draw a blow, a whistling sidewise cut that I had no trouble in dodging under. Then I knew he was mine. He was no more than a child in my hands, and in a moment I had him in the grip of knee and elbow, and was slowly, remorselessly, bending his body backward. At last, with a groan, he let the cudgel slip out of his nerveless hands and sank down, half fainting with pain and terror, at my feet.

I tossed the cudgel away. "I don't need that in dealing with you," said I. "I could kill you with my hands if you were to make it necessary. Lie still and don't attempt to cry out, or I will do it."

I left him lying there, with no precaution whatever further than keeping the corner of a watchful eye on him, and bent over his fellow-comrade in some real concern. I was happy to discover that my "turning-kick" had struck upon an unusually thick head. As a matter of fact, I limped for three days as a result of that blow. But the man on whom it had fallen showed signs of coming rapidly to his senses.

Satisfied that I had done him no serious damage, I rapidly explored his pockets. They contained a pair of handcuffs, just as I had expected; and now occurred to me a very good use to which they could be put.

I glanced swiftly about me, and in a moment found the thing that would answer my purpose; a root to an oak tree, looping up out of the ground, and then descending into it again. I tugged at it and satisfied myself that it would hold.

"Carry him over there," I ordered the second guard. He was still half dazed and wholly cowed, and did as I said.

"Now," said I sharply, "stand still and you won't be hurt."

I snapped one half of the manacle on the wrist of the fallen man, slid the other one under the root, and before he quite realized what had happened, the second guard was fast on the other side.

"Now," said I, in a tone of satisfaction, "you will be comfortable there for ever so long. Have you any money? If you have, I want it. Will you get it out yourself, or shall I search you?"

He blustered a little, but presently, with his free hand, pulled out of his trousers pocket what I am convinced was all he had, three dirty one-dollar bills and some small change.

"What's your name?" I asked.

"What do you want to know that for?" he demanded.

"So that I can send the money back, of course," said I. "Did you think I was a pickpocket?"

He told me his name, at that; and I will say here that I have sent him his money and I imagine him to be an extremely surprised man.

"There," said I, "I am much obliged. Now I will do you a favor. I suppose the minute I get over that wall you mean to begin to shout for help. This is the favor. *Don't do it.* Lie still; pretend you are as unconscious as this other poor beggar here. Let *him* come to and shout for help. Then you will be able to let him explain to Dr. Berry how it all happened. You have a chance to keep your job if you act on that idea. If you begin to bawl for help now, your job here will last you just about till sundown."

He would not say that he meant to take my advice, and I had to scramble over the wall and set out on the highroad, without knowing whether the chase was to be hot on my heels or not.

CHAPTER IV

MR. DUGGLEBY

IT is, I suppose, a merciful paradox of human nature that we never are actually in the depths of despair when there is the most to despair about. I had faced the task of outwitting a clever and perfectly unscrupulous villain, and of overpowering two of his hired thugs, with the most buoyant confidence. By scrambling over the wall and stepping out on the highway, a free man for the moment, at least, I had given proof that my confidence was not ill grounded.

My plan had succeeded beyond anything I could have hoped, the surplus being represented by three soiled dollar bills and the handful of change in my pocket, and by the probability that my guard would see it to his interest to take my advice and give me a clear start.

Certainly, if any friendly prophecy could have told me that morning when I had wakened naked and helpless after my drugged sleep, that in so few hours I should be tramping down a highroad,

free, and in no momentary danger of pursuit, I should have prophesied, on my part, that my soul would have been singing with joy as I walked along.

The truth was, however, that my case never had seemed so hopeless as at that moment. The very appearance of freedom that I had, seemed to mock me. So long as I had remained inside that wall, the other side of it had meant liberty to me. Now that I had succeeded in scrambling over, the whole affair seemed absurdly easy, while my present difficulties loomed mountain high.

After all, I was as completely a prisoner as before. I was as far from knowing who or where I was as I had been when I asked the question of the man at the other end of the bench. Of what lay at either end of the broad ribbon of the highway where I stood, I was as ignorant as a child of three. I was certain to be pursued, and for all I knew, the pursuit might at this moment be upon my heels.

In addition to all that, there came for the first time to my mind the thought—faint, remote, like the long-drawn baying note of a distant hound—that possibly, after all, I was mad! I, a man without a memory, a man who believed himself to be some one else, he knew not who! It might be that in climbing that wall and setting off

down the road, I was escaping from friends, whom nothing but my own delusions had turned to enemies.

The terror of that thought had a salutary effect. It stung me into life and action again. The mere intrinsic horror of it brought a healthy reaction of feeling in its wake. I took a coin from my pocket and sent it spinning into the air.

"Up the road, or down?" I questioned.

"Down," the coin decided it. I slapped it back into my pocket, and set off obediently at a brisk pace.

It was hard, once I had started, not to run, but I had made up my mind that my best chance of escape lay in remaining as inconspicuous as possible. So long as I had to trust my legs to carry me away, I would walk along in the shade like any other peaceful citizen out for an afternoon stroll.

I soon had the satisfaction of discovering that my coin had decided right for me. I was approaching a town, and a town was what I wanted. It was at towns that trains stopped, and I wanted a train that would carry me to the utmost limit of my three dollars.

I believe that this particular little city, whose outskirts I was just entering, has some reputation for beauty. Indeed, my own recollections of it include beautiful residences and the grateful shade

of venerable trees; but to me it is, and I imagine will always remain, a sort of nightmare.

It took every ounce of self-discipline that I could bring to bear to keep me from bolting like a frightened rabbit at sight of the first man who came walking toward me on the sidewalk. I had an absurd feeling that my looks must infallibly betray me as one in flight; more than that, as one in flight from Dr. Berry's highly respectable institution.

When I had succeeded in passing that man, without his stopping and saying to me, "Here, you, come back with me to Dr. Berry," I drew a great gasp of relief. But I had the same sensation of terror, and only a little milder, for every passer-by I met.

The windings of the streets confused me; yet I dared not ask my way, for fear of betraying myself. If I were to summon my courage to the point of asking some one to direct me to the railway station, I should be quite at a loss, I reflected, if he were to ask, "Which station?" If he were to supplement that query by asking where I wanted to go, my plight would be desperate indeed. I had not the name of a single town in my mind. If I were to attempt to answer my inquiring friend truthfully, and say that I wanted to go anywhere that was three dollars' worth away from here, I

should offer him no alternative but to call the nearest policeman.

For a while—I have no means of estimating how long—I wandered aimlessly about, now breaking into a run, and then checking myself sharply to a more decorous pace. At last, when I was nearly in despair, and all but exhausted, I found myself approaching the place I had been looking for.

My first glance about me, as I entered the men's waiting room, was reassuring. The long line of men before the ticket window was evidence that a train was going to leave for somewhere before very long.

I took my place in the line, relying on what I should learn between there and the window for the answer I was to make when the agent should say, "Where?"

The conversation between the two men immediately in front of me, soon gave me what I wanted.

"How much is the fare, anyway?" said one of them.

"Round trip or single?" inquired the other.

"Gracious!" said the first man, "I don't want to come *back*."

This was evidently a joke, for they both laughed. The man who knew said:

"One way it is three dollars and a half."

The change in my pocket amounted to fifty-six cents. My destination was decided. I did not yet know where it was, but the man just in front of me was going there, and the cost of going lay just within the limit of my worldly wealth. Whatever he said to the agent, I would echo when my turn came at the window.

There were, perhaps, twenty men between me and the window when I stepped into line. It was moving very slowly for some reason, and I had not got more than a quarter of the way, when the door by which I had entered opened with a bang from the propelling thrust of some one in a hurry. We all looked to see who the newcomer was.

The rest of the men in the line turned back again after a mere glance. The person who had come in meant nothing to them, one way or the other, I suppose. But as for me, I stood rooted in my place like a man in a nightmare, unable even to turn my face away under the numb paralysis of fear.

The man was Dr. Berry!

How he missed seeing my pale, terror-stricken face, which stared straight at him, I do not know. Of course I had no other idea at the time than that he had come in pursuit of me. The event soon proved me wrong; proved that he had no idea that I had escaped. Even at that I think he would

probably have seen me, had it not been for the fact that I was standing in line. For the eye treats a long file of men, waiting as we were, with a common object, not as a series of individuals at all, but simply as a thing which will require a given time to pass a certain point.

The moment his glance had traveled over us without lighting on me, I regained my nerve again; turned quickly and held my place in the line.

Dr. Berry walked straight to the window and spoke to the agent, over the head of the man who was buying a ticket.

"Has that special train come in yet?" he demanded.

I could not hear the agent's reply, but evidently it was to the effect that it had not.

The doctor turned away from the window with the air of one who, after a great hurry, finds that he has arrived on time. He still showed traces of excitement, however, and instead of settling down to wait quietly, paced impatiently back and forth the length of the waiting room.

He passed within an arm's length of me a dozen times, I suppose, and his eye must have run over me in my place in line fully as many times as that, but his thoughts were elsewhere, and he never looked.

I realized that my danger would be much greater after I had bought my ticket and had become a detached individual again in the crowd that was waiting for the gateman to open the door and let us out on the station platform. Well, there was nothing to do but to chance it. I had taken longer chances during the past twenty-four hours, when it came to that.

The man in front of me had reached the window. He laid down three dollars and a half, and said, "New York."

The sound of those two words gave me an immediate feeling of something near to joy. It was a place that I knew; I was sure of that. I had had no conscious knowledge of that name a moment before, but the mere sound of it lifted a little of the blank from off my past.

I shoved my own money under the grill, and was in the act of repeating the words myself, when the agent, without a glance at me, craning his neck to see beyond me, called aloud:

"Dr. Berry."

I swayed where I stood. Had I been able to command the mere physical strength for such an effort, I should no doubt have bolted; but, with my knees giving way under me, such a thing was clearly out of the question.

"Yes?" said the doctor interrogatively.

"That special train you were waiting for is in," said the agent.

"In the station now?" repeated the doctor angrily; "why was I not told?"

"It has only just come in, sir," said the agent. Then he called to the gate keeper:

"Let Dr. Berry out."

The doctor was shouldering his way through the crowd to the door.

"Where did you say?" said the agent to me.

"New York."

The words were only a whisper. I had to repeat them twice before he heard. Impatiently, he slapped down a ticket before me.

The gate keeper was opening the door. Dr. Berry started out, then stopped short in the doorway. A man coming in at the same moment almost collided with him, but the doctor showed no sign of anger.

"Mr. Duggleby," he exclaimed, "I am very, very glad you have come!"

I heard the name and saw the face of the man addressed as Duggleby all in the same instant. And somehow the sight and sound together seemed to ring a little bell of recognition away down within me.

I knew the name; I knew the face. A shrewd,

intelligent, rather cruel, deeply lined, middle-aged face. That man belonged to my past.

Somehow, somewhere, the identity of the man who had lost himself, the man who lived in my body and thought with my mind, had crossed the path of this formidable, almost sinister figure that stood in the doorway.

CHAPTER V

THE WOMAN IN THE CAB

THE crowd in the waiting room had forced me so close, that either the doctor or Mr. Duggleby could have touched me with his hands. Luckily neither dreamed that I was anywhere but in the safe-keeping of the two bruisers to whose tender mercies I had been turned over. But I had a monopoly of their thoughts; there could be no doubt of that.

"It was utterly unexpected," the doctor was saying, "his coming back to consciousness that way. I really got a fright when the guard brought me the news. I didn't entirely get over it until I learned from him that, by some queer freak, his memory had got left behind. That *would* have been serious, and even as things stood, I thought it well to send for you. He is extraordinarily shrewd in a way. His mind seems to work all the quicker for not having any memory to ballast it."

Mr. Duggleby frowned, and cast a quick glance

about the crowd, which made me duck unceremoniously.

"This is not quite the place to talk about it," he said in a low tone. "You have your carriage here, I suppose?"

"My automobile is waiting," said Dr. Berry, and a moment later they disappeared through the other door.

Then the train we had been waiting for came thundering in. It was something of a relief to me to learn that it was an express. A man who could afford to charter a special train to come on such an errand as Mr. Duggleby's, was undoubtedly in command of a large machinery which would be used to the utmost to detect my whereabouts and capture me.

Detectives would, in all probability, be waiting for me at the terminal, but I thought of a plan by which I hoped to be able to give them the slip. Once it was decided upon, I leaned comfortably back in my seat and went to sleep.

I had eaten nothing since my half-finished, opium-drugged meal the night before, and already the afternoon was well advanced. Sleep was the best substitute for food that I could get, and, curiously enough, it came to me readily.

I waked, as it happened, none too soon. The car was all astir with the preliminary bustle which

announced the expected arrival of a train at its terminal. Already we were jolting over the switches in the yard.

I sprang to my feet, hurried down the aisle, and, in defiance of the protests of the brakeman, swung myself off.

The air was alive with the shriek of whistles and the clang of bells, and great blinding headlights peered this way and that, in what seemed inextricable confusion, through the gathering dusk.

I was shouted at, cursed, all but arrested by one irate watchman, who must have thought I contemplated suicide; and I had, no doubt, a good many hairbreadth escapes that I know nothing about; but I emerged, at last, into the comparative quiet of a dingy, ill-paved street.

I had no idea where I was going; that is to say, the man who was only a little over twenty-four hours old had no idea, but I walked rapidly on, with perfect confidence. I was just learning the lesson which, in the next few days, was to be of such inestimable service to me, namely, that I am never so sure of going right as when I have given myself over completely to instinct. When I do that, I have a comfortable sense that the man I once was—a man who must have known many aspects of the world wisely and well—is in charge.

I went on so for some time, turning now to the

right, now to the left, never under a moment's hesitation as to my true course, and when, at last, I found myself walking along another railroad track into another station, I knew that the man I once was had guided me right.

I had no money for a ferry ticket, but an arriving throng of passengers on a train that had just pulled into the station saved me from embarrassment on that head. Deliberately, and quite unchallenged, I walked under a sign marked " Desbrosses Street," and out upon a ferryboat.

A few minutes later I was threading my way among the maze of streets in downtown New York.

The first stage of my flight was at an end. I was perfectly sure that I had eluded direct pursuit. No stealthy figure was tracking my steps as I made my way toward City Hall Park. I was in one of the finest hiding places in the world, a great city.

Yet I knew that a moment of overconfidence and a single careless blunder might prove fatal, even now. There was a combination of two causes that led me to drop down upon a bench in the crowded little square. One was the necessity I felt for laying out a plan of action, and the other, the sheer exhaustion of hunger. That was really a great danger.

My enemies had no doubt learned from the guard at least two hours ago exactly how much money I had set out with. If they were as shrewd as I believed them to be, they would have inferred, with reasonable certainty, that I had come to New York. At any rate, they would know if I had come to New York, that I had arrived penniless. Acting on that chain of deductions, they would certainly station their detectives at those points where a half-starved and penniless man might be expected to turn up, the police stations, the hospitals, and the relief depots of the Salvation Army.

I felt pretty sure after I had followed that line of thought to the end, that if I were to faint from hunger here where I sat—and I knew I was not far from it—that act would mark the end of my brief and illusory liberty. I must get food at once, and get it without begging for it.

I rose somewhat stiffly from my bench, and again put my affairs in the hands of the unknown stranger, myself—my real self, I mean—whose identity it was my task to seek. There was a certain peril in this proceeding, I was aware. My instincts might be trusted to know this city, I was sure, but could I be sure they would not take me, like a homing pigeon, straight back into the very citadel of my enemy?

However, that danger was one I could not possibly avoid. I would simply hope for better luck.

I walked northward, past the bridge terminal, and, with the perfect certainty of what must have been old acquaintance, turned to the right and plunged into the labyrinth of New York's lower East Side. I walked a few squares and stopped in front of a dingy little pawn shop. The only thing I had to put in pawn was the clothing upon my back, but that was of fine quality and perfectly new.

The pawnbroker was doing a rushing business, and I had a few moments of leisure to look him over before he could attend to my needs.

He was a rare bird, I am sure, in that corner of the world, anyway. There was no "ski" on the end of his name, I knew without consulting the sign. There was nothing Oriental in his looks. His nose, in absolute defiance of precedent, curved the wrong way, into an uncompromising, good-natured pug. In a word, he was good red Irish, and no mistake about it.

I felt pretty sure from the look in his gray eye when he finally turned it upon me, that he knew me, but he was far too discreet to acknowledge it, and I, under the circumstances, dared not give him a lead, dearly as I wanted to.

"I want to pawn these clothes," I said, when he asked me what he could do for me.

"All of them?" he inquired, with a twinkle.

"The whole outfit," I assured him.

He took that reply with a roar of laughter. "And go out naked?" he demanded. "Sure, I couldn't allow that myself."

"Oh, there's another half to the bargain," said I, "I want to buy some others. The best that I can get that will still leave me three or four dollars to boot in my pocket."

"You're not asking much, are you?" he said satirically, but there was a kindly undertone to his voice for all that. "Three or four dollars! What do you think I am going to allow you on them, to say nothing of what you will wear away? Old clothes is old clothes."

"These are not old, though," I told him. "You can sell them to a misfit house for ten dollars to-morrow. The clothes you will give me won't have cost you one. There is a hundred per cent profit. That ought to suit you."

I surprised myself more than I did him by my assurance in bargaining with him. If I were an old customer of his, I was one who knew the ropes.

We dickered about it for a while, and presently I secured an outfit which would not absolutely

condemn me as a vagrant at first glance, and two dollars to boot.

"What name?" he asked when the bargain was concluded.

I was prepared for that question.

"Andrew Meiklejohn," I said.

He shot me a quick look. Evidently it was not the name he knew me by.

"And the address?" he went on.

That question I had not foreseen, and the result was that I answered instinctively. At the answer I gave, he broke, for a second time, into a full-mouthed laugh. On second thought I could not wonder at it, for I had told him I lived at the Holland House.

I suppose I betrayed some confusion in the moment before I could take my cue from him and treat my reply as a pleasantry.

"Getting it a bit mixed, ain't you?" he asked.

By that time I had recovered myself.

"Oh, let it go at that," said I.

I changed my clothes and walked out of the shop. My legs were in charge again, and they took me straight to a dingy little coffeehouse, where I ate as, I am willing to bet, I had never eaten before. There were no drugs in that food, anyway.

I wonder if it was fate that took charge of my

wanderings after I left that little coffeehouse. It was not instinct, not that well-informed stranger—myself—who had led me so unerringly to the good-humored Irish pawnbroker. For I was on the track now of a discovery which, with all his knowledge and experience, my unknown self could never have foreseen.

I was strolling up the Bowery, too tired to think or to lay my plans, forgetting the steady job which I knew would be the only guarantee against my falling, within a day or two, into the hands of my shrewd and relentless enemies.

I suppose I took the Bowery because it was pleasantly crowded with people who looked enough like me in my transformed state to prevent my being conspicuous. I was not even planning where I should pass the night. That question would solve itself, no doubt, in an hour or two. For the present I was, perhaps, the most utterly idle, purposeless waif on all that crowded thoroughfare.

I was strolling north on the west side of the street, and had no recollection of how far I had gone, when, after dodging across one of the broader east and west streets—it may have been Grand, though I hardly think I had gone so far—I paused on the north curb. There was a little huddle of vehicles there, delayed for a moment to let the stream of crosstown traffic go by, and

conspicuous among them by its comparative rarity in that neighborhood, was a large, private, electric hansom.

My eye rested on it, as it had rested on the others, listless, indifferent, but in the space of that single glance the face of the whole world changed. My heart stopped dead still. Then, at the end of a suffocating second, it leaped forward again madly.

The interior of the carriage was brightly lighted, and in the oval window I saw a woman's profile. Even now, when the memory of it is a week old, I can hardly command my pen to describe it sanely. A small head, delicately erect, a mass of lustrous black hair which curved up under her small black hat in a line unbroken by any stray locks; a face rather pale, and in its detail of nostril, lips, and chin wonderfully finely chiseled. The eyes, under their fine, even brows, and in the shadow of their long, curving lashes, were luminous, frank, steadfast, but they had, or at least I fancied they had, as I recalled the moment, later, a hint of tragedy in them.

And I, on the curb, a homeless and all but hopeless vagrant, stood staring through that little oval window, spellbound.

The face was the face of the woman of my dreams!

CHAPTER VI

LOST

THE cab had started on again, and it was, perhaps, halfway down the next block before I had recovered from the daze into which the sight of her had thrown me.

Then, stifling back the outcry that rose to my lips, I set out in mad pursuit, running, dodging in and out among the vehicles, like a man demented.

Even at my best speed, of course the electric carriage kept leaving me farther and farther behind. I thought I had lost her, but at that moment a trolley car came flying along, its motors screaming with the stress of full speed. It was a distinctly hazardous proceeding to attempt to board it thus in full flight, but I made it without the least hesitation. I should have attempted to jump aboard an express train under similar circumstances.

More by luck than anything else, I succeeded in scrambling up onto the running board and into the car, sustaining no more serious damage than

a painful wrench to my arms and whatever shock my feelings may have suffered under the imprecations of the conductor, who assured me that I deserved to have been killed. I paid him my fare, and then leaned out to look ahead. We were rapidly overtaking the hansom.

Once we ran alongside, and this time I noticed that the lady of my dreams was not alone in the carriage. A young man was sitting beside her, a very smartly turned out young gentleman, of somewhere about my own age. He was good-looking, in the loose sense in which that term is used, but he did not look very good.

The expression on his well-made features was distinctly cynical and almost saturnine. If he had caught a glimpse of me, straining out from my seat in the trolley car that I might gaze to advantage on the wonderful face of the girl who sat beside him, and could have known the feelings with which I was looknig at it, how he would have laughed! Or would he, I wonder? Perhaps his expression would have been grimmer than that.

The hansom was delayed by some slowly moving vehicle in front, and our car darted ahead, they turning in behind us on the track. We were nearing the bridge terminal where my car stopped, and I, fancying they would turn west toward one of

the downtown ferry stations, feared I was going to lose them.

To my relief, and equally to my surprise, the hansom stopped at the curb only a few paces away from the terminal itself. I slipped off the car and made my way back toward it. I came up well within earshot before I stopped. If it was dishonorable to listen to their conversation, well, be the dishonor on my own head.

He seemed to be protesting against her leaving the vehicle. " Really, it is absurd, you know," he said, " that I should put you down here and leave you to make your way alone through all that crush. At least, let me take you across the bridge. Then I will let you go wherever you like, and, on my word of honor, I will make no attempt to follow."

" No, no," she said, rising decisively, as if to put an end to his persistence; " it is a compromise as it is, you know, and, really, I can't let you come any farther."

He rose without any further insistence and helped her down to the curb.

" I am sorry it has all turned out to be so futile," he said. " I didn't know myself that father had gone until just a few minutes before you came, and I had no means of letting you know. I am sure he would not have broken the appointment if he could have helped it. I don't know what it

was that called him away; his message only said that he had had some disquieting news and had been obliged to go down into New Jersey for a day or two. I know he took a special train, so you may be sure it was important."

"Oh, I understand perfectly," she said. "Two or three days don't matter much after all these months."

The words evidently meant more to the young man than appeared on the surface.

"You must not think too badly of us," he said. "I don't wonder that your father is suspicious. Inventors are nearly all like that. It is not a bit surprising that he should go off and hide himself and not let us know his address. But you must not share those suspicions yourself. That would be too absurd. Come, just to show there is no ill feeling, let me take you home. I won't look where we are going, and you need not tell your father I did it, so where would be the harm?"

"That's quite out of the question," she said, and her voice had a cutting edge to it. "Good night, Mr. Duggleby."

I think my memory must be trying to make up to me for all the wrong it has done by being exceptionally vivid and accurate regarding the minute details of these days that have passed since

I recovered my consciousness. If it had not been so, I should never have been able to remember that conversation, for my mind, until the very last word of it, was hardly upon it at all.

What I was thinking of as I skulked there in the shadow, was the question, what course I should take when the other man had left her.

There she stood, the woman I had said I would search the world to find. There was the face that had come in my dreams; that had encouraged me through every perilous moment during my escape from the asylum; and in my dreams, when she had looked at me from under the shadow of those curving lashes, there had been love in her eyes.

Would they brighten with the same fire now if I were to stand before her, demanding recognition? The thing seemed absurd when I thought of the difference between us. She, standing there beside the electric hansom from which she had just dismounted, clad in that beautiful tailored simplicity, and patrician in every line of her; and I, the shabby, penniless scarecrow which the events of the last twenty-four hours had reduced me to, shuffling off a few paces in the dark to avoid being moved on by the suspicious policeman who already had his eye on me.

My unknown self had been a gentleman, whether she knew him or not, and it seemed

rather cruel to him, as well as to her, to present to her this travesty on him. Still, my overwhelming eagerness kept me in doubt, held my decision trembling in the balance, until the utterance of that last word, the name of "Duggleby."

I shrank back at it, perfectly instinctively, and for a few seconds my mind raced at lightning speed.

There had been more than coldness in her manner toward him; there had been dread. He was her enemy as well as mine. Yet, in my present state, the discovery of who I was would put an added burden upon her, and I should be no better than a coward if I were to ask her to assume it.

There was comfort in the discovery, though. Her use of that man's name convinced me that my dreams had not lied to me. I was sure that if I were to go to her and say, "I am in flight. I have just escaped from the asylum where Mr. Duggleby has had me shut up and from which he meant I never should escape," just those words, and no more, I should see a flush of recognition coloring that pale face, and should feel the clasp of two friendly hands, friendly, if no more than that. Yes, there was comfort in that thought at least.

I had let her walk past me and get halfway up the stairs to the elevated platform, before it oc-

curred to me that though I could not call on her for help, I might, at least, try to learn the secret which was denied to the Dugglebys. I could follow her home, and then when I was in a position to bring help, not to ask it, I should know where to find her.

I rushed up the steps, two at a time, but she had been walking briskly, and I did not immediately overtake her. The train was standing at the platform, ready to depart, and all I saw was the disappearing flash of her skirt as she entered it.

I had no time to reach the platform of the car she had entered, only barely succeeded, in fact, in squeezing past the closing gate of the car nearest me. I made my way through the train as rapidly as its crowded condition would permit, forward to the foremost end of the front car, and then all the way back again, scrutinizing every face. It was a long time before I would admit to myself the possibility that I had been mistaken, but at last the fact became so evident as to be beyond denial.

Heartsick, I sank into the nearest seat. My eyes had played me false. I had taken the wrong train. I had lost her!

CHAPTER VII

I GET A JOB

IT struck me that fate had played a rather grim joke on me, when I discovered that the destination of the train I had taken was Coney Island. While I sat there, heartsick that the little gleam of hope which for a moment should have been vouchsafed me had been so quickly extinguished, I was listening, involuntarily and wholly automatically, to the jokes, the giggles, the light-hearted and rather empty-headed merriment of a crowd of people who could apparently be made perfectly happy by the simple process of shooting the chutes or taking a ride on the scenic railway.

Why I did not get off the train and take another back to New York, I hardly know. Probably because I simply lacked the initiative and the energy to do anything; or, perhaps, again, it was what we call " fate " that had the matter in charge.

At any rate, I did not move from my seat until the train had made its last stop. Then I drifted out with the crowd and was caught in the great

current that flowed and eddied and swirled, but never stagnated, along that remarkable thoroughfare known as Surf Avenue.

But none of all its well-assorted wonders had any power to divert or amuse me, even for a moment. Presently, to escape from the blare and the glare of it, I found my way down to the beach.

I did not find solitude even here, but there was a good surf rolling in, and its thunderous diapason drowned out the strident human noises which had disturbed me. Under its influence the mad circular whirl of my thoughts, which I feared would drive me mad, if I were not indeed mad already, was quieted.

One by one—or two by two, to put it more accurately—the strollers who had shared the beach with me went their ways, packed themselves into clanking trains or noisy excursion steamers, and sought their homes.

That strip of sand, with the great combers creaming up beyond, was all the home I had, and at last I had it to myself. With the solitude came sleep, the heavy sleep of complete exhaustion.

In my former state, as I am coming to think, I must have been a vagrant indeed, or else a millionaire. When I wakened the next morning, and pretty well on in the morning it must have been, judging by the height of the sun, I was not in the

least distressed by the fact that I had only very little more than a dollar in the world, and no notion in the world how I was going to earn another.

I stretched myself, shook the sand out of my hair, and then proceeded to invest nearly one fourth of my worldly wealth in the luxury of a sea bath. The attendant at the bathing house looked at me curiously, and I don't wonder, for the experience of encountering a tatterdemalion figure like mine at ten o'clock in the morning at Coney Island, wanting to spend twenty-five cents for the rental of a bathing suit, must have been rare, if not, indeed, unique.

It was no extravagance for me, however; perhaps it was the most sensible investment I could have made. I found I was a good swimmer, and the experience of battling with those heavy surges effectually washed away the doubts, fears, and disappointments which had threatened to paralyze my energy, and left me my own man again.

When it was over, when refreshed in mind and body, I resumed, though somewhat ruefully, the outfit of clothing which my friend O'Brien had provided me with, I still had the price of a breakfast in my pocket. What more could a man ask?

But Surf Avenue, as I soon found, is rarely called upon to supply a casual wayfarer with

breakfast. It was almost deserted, and I had to walk perhaps two hundred yards before finding a place that appeared to be open for business.

The one I came upon at last, a sort of combination concert-hall saloon, was just opening up. An extremely dirty, blear-eyed waiter was wiping off the sticky tops of the iron tables with a very questionable-looking mop.

The room was a large one. It contained, perhaps, two hundred tables. At the farther end of it, a gaudily painted and indescribably shabby proscenium arch and drop curtain proclaimed the existence of a stage. An upright piano stood before the center of it, and a battered bass viol and a drum with cymbals attached, hinted at the existence of an orchestra. The whole place reeked indescribably with the remains of the orgy of the night before.

But for the vivifying preparation of a sea bath, I could not have thought of breakfasting there. Luckily, however, I was in no critical mood.

I approached the waiter: "Can I get some ham and eggs and a cup of coffee here?" I asked.

He eyed me with mingled reluctance and suspicion.

"Yaas," he said in beery accents, "I subbose you can if you have got the brice."

"Go ahead and order it, then," said I, and I

suppose that my manner must have carried conviction, though my appearance did not, for without further demur he walked away and disappeared through a greasy door which I supposed led to the kitchen.

The quality of the food when it came, after considerable delay, was much better than appearances had led me to expect, and I cleared my platter with enthusiasm.

When I had finished, however, I was still conscious of a lack of something, and it was rather puzzling to know what it could be. I was no longer hungry, but I certainly felt that my breakfast had been incomplete. The waiter himself unconsciously gave me the cue by lighting up the stump of a half-unwrapped cigar. That was it. I wanted to smoke. It was simply another little piece in the mosaic I was constructing of the identity of myself, and I welcomed it accordingly. I paid for my breakfast, and bought a cigar, which reduced my worldly capital to a few odd dimes and nickels.

Well, it was high time that I should be doing something. I ought to be back in New York at this moment hunting a job. The reason I did not go was simply that the instinctive man in me—the man who had just demanded a smoke—was still in clamorous rebellion, and what he

was pointing toward now was the battle-scarred piano at the other end of the hall.

"It's utterly absurd," I told myself. "What if you can play the piano, is this the time and place to try it?"

Yet he had led me right before, and perhaps he deserved some concessions. The waiter was still lingering near my table. I pushed fifteen cents toward him. Then leaving him stupefied with astonishment, I deliberately walked down the hall, seated myself before the piano and began to play.

I had no idea what I was playing, but I knew that the row of white and black ivories beneath my fingers accepted me submissively as their master.

I don't know how much later it was, probably not more than four or five minutes, when the sound of heavy breathing at my elbow caused me to look around. It was the waiter, but the waiter strangely transformed. His eyes were shining with excitement; there were tears in them.

"Play that once more," he said, though his lips were trembling so that he could scarcely command the utterance.

"What was it I played?" I asked, and then by way of explaining the apparent folly of the ques-

tion, added: "I was thinking of something else, and really don't know myself."

"That wonderful second variation," he said, "I haven't heard it—" and then he trailed off into a jargon of speech in a language which I instinctively called German, but could not understand.

His words were enough, however, to recall what I had been playing, and as I proceeded to obey him, the name Beethoven, and the opus number of the sonata came clearly back to my mind. I played on and on in a sort of daze. The past was opening up behind me so rapidly; such a horde of names and melodies, and strange unclassified associations came pouring in on me, that it is no wonder that I was bewildered.

The necessity for going out and finding a job was forgotten. I had forgotten where I was. I only knew that my old unknown self was awakening, was busy with his memories, was wandering in the labyrinth of the past. Ah, if he could but find his way out!

The sound of footsteps recalled me to the present. My waiter was approaching in company with another man, a stocky, low-browed person, with a red face, a long, well-oiled mustache, and what passed for a diamond in an expanse of very dirty shirt front.

He did not speak to me at once, but began rum-

aging through a heap of soiled and shabby music sheets which lay on the piano. Presently he found what he wanted, and spread it open before me on the rack.

"Play that," he said.

I glanced at it indifferently. It appeared to be a stupid and rather inane composition, in highly syncopated time.

"You really want to hear it?" I asked.

He stared at me.

"No, I don't want to hear it," he said, "I want to hear if you can play it. This waiter here he came to me and nearly throwed a fit about how you could bang the box. If you can rattle off that rag, you'll do."

"I get the idea," said I; "you want to see if I can play it."

"That's what I want to see."

For a moment my mind worked fast. Obviously here was a chance for a job. But such a job! Yet, I reflected, what chance had I for anything better? Where could I get employment, except in some such way as this, without accounting for myself; telling who I was, where I came from, what previous employment I had had? I might be able to invent a past, perhaps, but I could not forge references. On the other hand, the piano seemed to offer me a key that might serve to pick

the lock of my mystery. In a moment I had taken my decision.

"I get a job, then, if I can play this?" I asked.

"That's what I am telling you," he said impatiently. "It ain't the regular job, though, you understand. You're to spell off the other fellow between shows."

"Well and good," said I.

Then, on the spur of the moment, I decided to dazzle him a little. I ran my eye over the wretched composition on the rack before me, closed it and tossed it back on top of the piano. I checked his profane exclamation, with upraised hand.

"Listen," said I; and then I played it through; played it, I am moderately sure, as that particular piece of claptrap had never been played before.

He listened, his eyes fairly starting out of his head, until I had finished. Then what he took to be the true explanation, occurred to him.

"Oh," he said, "you can't work that on me; you know it."

"No," I said, "I have never seen it before, or heard it, for that matter."

The waiter was nodding his head in solemn wonder. I turned to him for confirmation.

"The melody was stolen from 'The Blue Danube,'" I explained, "and the harmonies

amount to nothing. Any man who knew his business could do as much. Isn't that so?"

But the waiter was beyond words. He just went on nodding his head portentously.

I also detected signs of excitement in the proprietor. He made me play a dozen different pieces, not, toward the end, so much to try my powers, as to confirm his growing belief that he had made a great find.

"You go on the regular show," he said, after our impromptu musicale had lasted some little time. "You have got the other fellow skinned alive."

That would have been satisfactory had he stopped there, but, as it happened, in the rather listless amusement of astonishing him, I had gone somewhat too far. I realized this when I found him considering the project of putting me, not in his orchestra, but on the stage, billed as a great discovery, "The Tramp Pianist."

I tried to argue him out of this idea, but my remonstrances made him all the more determined.

"What're you beefin' about?" he demanded. "You'll get three times as much in your pay envelope, and then, maybe, one of those wise guys from old Broadway will come dropping in here, and the first thing you know, you will be drawing a hundred a week at Keith & Proctor's. Didn't

you never hear of Nettie, the Lady Barytone? She got her start singing for me."

His view of the matter left me in a rather serious quandary. He had not quite the eye or the bearing of a man upon whose candid good faith one could rely implicitly. If I were even to hint to him that there were reasons why I was anxious to avoid attracting attention, he would probably not be above using the hold upon me which this knowledge gave him to reduce me to a position of daily slavery and terror.

Already he was looking at me curiously, and I could see a gleam of suspicion as to the cause of my hesitancy alight in his eye.

Then suddenly the solution of the problem occurred to me. It was so easy and so obvious that I almost laughed aloud.

"See here," I said, taking him confidentially by the elbow and drawing him off a little out of hearing of the waiter, "you don't recognize me, do you?"

He looked a little startled.

"Well, that's not remarkable," I went on, "because I am pretty well disguised. I would not tell it to anybody else, but I am really the Czar of Russia. Now if you put me up on that stage with my face to the audience, some of those nihilists around here——"

I broke off here and glanced cautiously at the waiter.

"Do you suppose he is one?" I asked. "Do you suppose he is a spy?"

I could see by his eyes that the trick had worked. He was looking at me with a mixture of fear and contempt which an insane person always inspires in one of his order of mind.

I don't know that my story alone would have convinced him, but it fitted in too well with my unkempt appearance and my otherwise unaccountable performance at the piano for him to doubt it. I was some harmless lunatic escaped from an asylum.

If he could safeguard me from attracting too much attention, he stood a chance to keep me and get my valuable services at the piano at almost no expense; but to put me up on the stage and make a feature of me, would, of course, be fatal. No contract that he could get me to sign would safeguard him against losing me the moment my real identity was discovered.

Presently he came back to me. "Where do you live?" he demanded.

I made a vague gesture.

"I am not at my palace now," said I.

"Well, now," he said, using, grotesquely

enough, the coaxing tone which people address to children, " well, now, you stay here and live with me. I will board you free and I will pay you two dollars per day. Does that go? "

And that was how I got a job.

CHAPTER VIII

A NEW FRIEND AND AN OLD ENEMY

IT was during the leisure moments of the two weeks that I worked as pianist in Mike Lynch's saloon that I wrote the account of my adventures up to the point where I now resume it.

An extended account of that engagement would have no place in this narrative. As I think of that time now, I wonder alternatively how I endured it as long as I did, and, on the other hand, whether I might not be there still if fate had not, in her drastic and unexpected way, taken a hand in the game.

For a man of any refinement of musical feeling, the experience of banging away, night after night, the same inane, vulgar songs and dances could be nothing but torture. The spent, malodorous moral atmosphere of the place, the leers and jests in the strident voices of red-legged soubrettes, the vulgar antics of clowns disfigured to the point of nausea by what is known as "comic makeup," the brawlers in the audience, besotted with drink, all these were subsidiary evils.

Much as I hated it, however, it is easy to see why I stayed. Any preliminary toward finding other work would involve quitting this job I had, for Lynch, during the time I was not at the piano, hardly allowed me out of his sight.

The violent adventures of the first two or three days following my return to consciousness had left me in a sort of lassitude, where any routine which comprised food and shelter and bade fair to keep me out of the hands of those two dreaded Dugglebys, father and son, was hard to exchange for another fierce tussle with the world.

The night that was destined to be the last of that experience, the night when fate took her hand in the game, began like all the others. It was a stifling hot Saturday night. All Coney Island was gorged with restless pleasure seekers, and, as usual, the dregs of that great teeming mass of humanity settled in Lynch's saloon.

Indeed, the notoriety of this unsavory resort was what provided the only mitigating feature of its audiences. It was so bad that decent people often came to see how bad it was. These amateur sociologists never failed to afford me a good deal of quiet amusement whenever they sat where I could see them or hear them talk.

There had been no such pleasant diversion tonight, however, and at ten o'clock, when the orgy

had got fairly into full swing, I was pounding away, resolved to get through the evening by sheer brute endurance.

Suddenly, during a lull in the noise, coincident with the appearance of an alleged comic monologist, I heard the sounds of an altercation at a table just behind me. There was nothing unusual in that, Heaven knows, and I should not even have turned my head, had it not been that the voice and speech of one of the disputants were such as I had never heard before in that place.

He was a gentleman, evidently one of those amateur sociologists I have spoken about, and he was laboriously trying to express himself in very broken and insufficient English.

I whirled about on my stool to see what it was all about. The man, whose explanation seemed to be making so little headway, was a gentleman of middle age, of highly intelligent appearance, but somewhat unfortunately for him, he was in full evening dress. By the time that I had turned around, so many people were talking to him at once, and with such unnecessary wealth of gesture and expletive, that it took me a moment to discover the true cause of his offense myself.

It was no wonder that he was utterly bewildered. It seemed he had seated himself, in all in-

nocence, in a chair which had been only temporarily relinquished by a lady of the party which occupied the other seats at the table, a lady whose reappearance was momentarily to be expected.

The noise of expostulation swelled rapidly; two or three waiters were coming up; the comic monologist from the stage lent his voice to the altercation, and there seemed to be all the material for a fair-sized row. Once more the gentleman, in his halting, laborious way, attempted to inquire what was wrong. Then suddenly, to my amazement, he broke into most rapid and fluent speech.

There was an instant of silence, and then from all the tables about came guffaws of laughter. As for me, I sat there on my piano stool spellbound for the moment by the double realization that he was speaking another language than English, which my inner man instinctively labeled French, *and that I understood what he was saying.*

I rose and walked over to him.

" Monsieur," said I, in his own tongue, " possibly I may be able to clear up this little misunderstanding."

He looked up at me and gasped with relief.

" Thank God! " he said.

I explained the situation to him, whereupon he arose, of course, with a comprehensive bow of

apology. I accompanied him to another vacant chair, not far away, and ascertained for him that no one else had a prior claim to it.

"I am a thousand times obliged," he said. "There were all the materials for a very unpleasant few moments, from which you, sir, were good enough to rescue me. I should not have ventured in here alone if I had suspected that my command of English would fail me in that ridiculous way at a crisis."

Unconscious of what I was doing, I drew up another opportunely vacated chair, and seated myself beside him. I was as oblivious to my present surroundings as I had been that morning two weeks before when I first seated myself at the piano.

My old self absolutely dominated me. I was struggling again to organize, to coördinate, the horde of memories, associations, pictures, which the sound of this fine, pure French speech awakened within me.

I found him looking at me curiously.

"You will pardon my asking the question," he said, "but are you not the gentleman who was seated at the piano when I came in?"

That question brought the present back to me. I rubbed my hand vaguely across my forehead.

"Yes," said I. "Yes—I was."

"In that case," he said, "I am obliged to you for more than rescuing me from the consequences of my stupid blunder. It was a delightful, though somewhat mystifying experience to have heard one of Tschaikowsky's waltzes played as you played it, in a—a——"

"A hell of this sort," I finished for him.

He shrugged his shoulders in mild deprecation.

"I hardly realized where my sentence was taking me when I began it," he said, "but I am obliged to confess that you have greatly piqued my curiosity."

"Apparently it takes a certain number of mysteries to make up a world," said I. "Shall I strain your curiosity too far if I ask a question?"

"Proceed, monsieur."

"I believe," said I slowly, "that I am at this moment carrying on a conversation with you in French?"

His eyes widened.

"But most assuredly," he said.

"And further," I went on, "if it is a question you are willing to give me a candid answer to, is my speech in French the speech of a gentleman of education?"

I had simply surprised him before; now he was interested. He looked at me more closely, with a puzzled frown.

"How can monsieur ask that?" he said. "You certainly are of French birth, are you not?"

I shook my head. "It may be," I said, "I do not know."

He, as well as I, had forgotten for the moment where we were, but in the next moment we got a sharp reminder.

My comic monologist had come to the end of his string of pleasantries, and had given me the cue to the introduction of one of his songs. There was a moment of confusion when I failed to respond. He peered over the footlights into the little well where I was supposed to sit and remarked my absence; and at the same time Lynch, from his post of general observation, discovered where I was. He bore down upon me in a rage.

"What are you doin' here?" he demanded, seizing me roughly by the arm. "This is no time for you to get luny. Go back to that piano, and be quick about it."

To make sure his orders were carried out, he retained his hold on my arm, and piloted me down the aisle. There was a general craning of necks and scraping of chairs. The crowd seemed to be scenting another row.

Rather humiliated by the situation in which I found myself, I asked Lynch to let go my arm,

saying that I would go directly to the piano myself.

The sound of my voice had a curious effect on one of the men whose table I was passing. He was one of a party of three, and the other two were facing me. They were clearly of a much higher social order than the average frequenters of the resort, but this fact was not apparent from their manner, for they were drunk to the point of being boisterous.

The third man, whose face I could not see, was presumably in the same condition, but at the sound of my voice as I spoke to Lynch in passing him, he started, as if stung, and slued half around.

Luckily for me, he turned the wrong way, and was balked in his evident intention of getting a look at me, but I caught a quarter view of his face, and that was enough to bring the old numbing terror back over me again. The man was young Duggleby!

The table where he and his companions sat was not more than three or four paces from my piano. I must have played the song perfectly automatically, for I have no recollection whatever of anything going on during the next few minutes, except the conversation of those three men. My ears picked it out from the midst of all the tumult; the noise I myself was making at the piano, the rau-

cous voice of the comedian, the clatter of glasses and of plates, were all to me as if they had been silence.

"I tell you I know him," Duggleby kept repeating, emphasizing his remarks by pounding with his stein upon the table. "Know him? I'd know him in Egypt."

"Oh, you're drunk," said one of his friends; "shut up."

And the second man said:

"They will chuck us out in a minute. You know they're glad of the advertisement they get by throwing a gentleman out of a sty like this."

"I know I'm drunk," said Duggleby. "Have I said I wasn't? Is there any man here who can tell me that I'm not drunk, or that I said I wasn't? But I'm not going to be drunk any more; I can't afford to."

"Oh, come," laughed one of the others; "the night's young. Have another."

"No!" said young Duggleby. "You two can make blind fools of yourselves if you like, but I tell you I can't afford it. Drink what you like. I'm going to have coffee. I mean to be sober in ten minutes."

And it soon became evident that by sheer will power he was doing exactly as he said. My heart sank deeper and deeper, as every succeeding sen-

tence he uttered showed that he was bringing his wandering wits into better and better control.

It was evident to me then, if it had not been before, how seriously my escape had alarmed those two rich, formidable Dugglebys. Evidently my success in finding the man I sought and reëstablishing my own identity would spell disaster to both of them.

Duggleby was speaking again.

"Now listen, you two," he said. "I am sober. Understand that, and don't start a row when I get up to do what I am going to do now. There won't be any row, unless you start it. But if one of you tries to hold me, he's going to get hurt. I'm going up to have a look at that man at the piano. When I leave this place, you get up and follow me out. I shall want your help."

And still I sat there playing over and over again the jigging bars of the dance tune that accompanied the flying feet of the comedian. What else was there to do? Evidently he never dreamed that I could have overheard what he was saying to his friends, for the trick he played could do him no good, except as he believed that he was deceiving me.

He deliberately assumed the condition he had verily been in not a quarter of an hour before. He staggered as he rose from his chair, and came

reeling down the aisle, smiling with the drunken satisfaction of one who thinks he is about to do something exquisitely funny.

That reeling gate is deceptive. A man can go faster that way than he can walk, except with the obvious appearance of haste.

Before any of the waiters or bystanders could come to my assistance, he had pulled me around on the stool, flung his arms around me and embraced me as if I had been his long-lost brother. The maneuver gave him time enough to shoot one blazing, searching glance straight into my face, a look as little drunken, as swift, as purposeful as a fencer's.

Of course it was over in a minute. Lynch himself was only half a dozen paces off, and before I could get my breath, he and one of the waiters were bundling Duggleby off down the aisle.

I saw through the trick, but I am sure it would have deceived me had I not overheard his previous conversation. He wanted to avoid alarming me unnecessarily, and hoped that even if I recognized him and knew how much I had to fear from him, I should still believe his act to have been one of mere drunken folly, of which he would have no recollection when he should wake up with a bad headache to-morrow morning.

If that interpretation of his action were correct,

and I could think of no other, I felt with sickening certainty that he must be, at that very moment, laying his plans to capture me before the night was out. I was safe, in all probability, for just so long as the crowd remained in the saloon and I stuck to my piano stool.

When I reached that conclusion, the time, which had crept so slowly, suddenly began to fly. The minutes, the fives, the quarters, marked by the small clock which stood upon the piano, sped by as if on wings, and still I could think of no plan that seemed to promise even a faint hope of escape.

There were three of them, and undoubtedly Duggleby would be able to enlist more in his service, if he felt them necessary to make assurance doubly sure.

They were clad in motoring clothes, I vividly remembered, and that meant an automobile. It turned me sick to think that that automobile was likely to make a record run out to Dr. Berry's asylum this very night.

I ran over in my mind the list of acquaintances I had made here in the saloon during the past two weeks, in the hope of finding some one to whom I could appeal for help.

Lynch himself was out of the question. The man, I was convinced, was a thorough-going

rogue. I had very little doubt that Duggleby had fixed him already. He was nowhere in sight.

I turned about for a second, and cast a glance at the entrance to the saloon, at the far side of the hall. People were going out already in streams, but I fancied, amidst the crowd, that I saw one figure holding its place, a figure clad in a long motoring coat.

My margin of safety now could only be reckoned by minutes. The waiters were yawning; the performers who came on the stage were of a sort known in the slang of that world as "chasers." In another half hour, at the most, I should be abandoned to the mercy of my enemies.

And then, from a source from which I never dreamed of expecting it, aid came. A waiter brought a visiting card and laid it on the piano rack. It was engraved with the name and title of Dr. Charles Marie de Villiers of Paris, Member of the French Academy of Medicine. On the back was written in French:

I believe you are in difficulty. Will you accept such aid as I may be able to render you?

It was indiscreet, but I could not help swinging abruptly around on the piano stool. There sat the Frenchman, the man in evening dress, whom I had assisted earlier in the evening. It had never

occurred to me that he had not left the place hours before.

I caught his eye, and he shot me an almost imperceptible signal to turn back again to the piano. He, too, had probably seen the man in the motor coat waiting in the doorway, and he had perceived that his aid would be immensely more valuable to me if the spy had no suspicion that it was about to be given.

The mere knowledge that he was there, that he had waited to help me, that I was no longer alone with my back against the wall, acted on me like a powerful stimulant. A plan flashed into my mind on the instant. Pulling a sheet of music from the top of the piano, I wrote upon it, as fast as I could make my fingers fly:

A thousand thanks. I am going through the door that leads into the kitchen. I will wait at the other side of it. If the spy at the door disappears, or if he comes down the aisle, as if in pursuit of me, pound on the table with your glass. They will think you are calling a waiter.

I wrote, of course, in French. Then I nodded to the waiter who had brought me the card.

"This is the sheet of music the gentleman wishes to see," said I; "take it over to him."

I figured that upon seeing me disappear, the spy

"'This is the sheet of music the gentleman wishes to see.'"

would do one of two things: either bolt around outside the saloon to the rear entrance to warn the people there to be ready for me, or else that he would pursue me through the saloon itself. In either case, I should answer the doctor's signal by coming immediately back into the saloon. If the spy had rushed around to the back door, as I thought it more than likely he would, the doctor and I could walk out of the front entrance unmolested. In case he pursued me—well, it would be only man to man, and I imagined that I could give a good account of him and still make my escape through the main door.

It was only a moment before I heard the doctor's signal. The spy had disappeared, as I thought it more than likely he would. The doctor and I walked rapidly toward the door.

"You have repaid my small favor a thousandfold," said I, "for unless I am altogether insane, I was in a very serious difficulty when you came to the rescue. I hope soon to have a chance to thank you more adequately for having got me out of it."

"I have not got you out of it yet," he said shortly. "Don't make that mistake. That young man who sobered himself up by sheer force of will, and then shammed drunk to get a look at you, is no fool, and it was he who stood guard at

the door yonder. He had put on his friend's motor coat and cap. Oh, no, we are not done with him yet."

There was a sort of repressed thrill of joy in his voice, as if, except for his sympathy for me, he found an adventure of this sort very much to his taste.

"Well," said I, "if you will walk with me as far as the platform where the rapid transit express leaves for Brooklyn, that will make my safety secure enough."

"I won't put you on a train," he said. "I have an automobile here, and I shan't leave you until I have got you home, wherever that may be."

I laughed. "I have no home in the world," said I.

He made a sort of grimace at that, but rather as though my admission made the adventure all the more agreeable to him than otherwise.

We had got out into the street without molestation. Surf Avenue was emptying fast, but there was still enough of a crowd to make the picking out of any individual a difficult matter.

"He's lost us, I think," said I.

The Frenchman only shook his head.

"Well, then, what do you think he means to do?" I questioned.

"If I knew," he said shortly, "the excitement

of this affair would then be at an end." Then he added: "Don't talk any more; don't say another word. My automobile is in the shed there, just past the entrance to Luna Park. Here's where we lose or win."

The entrance was still ablaze with light, which made the little alley just beyond all the blacker. This circumstance seemed to trouble the doctor.

"I was fool enough not to have crossed the street," he whispered, "and come up from the other side."

We turned to the left and started down the alley toward the automobile shed. I noticed there were two cars there. A second later the doctor uttered an exclamation of alarm; and the next moment my arms were pinioned from behind.

CHAPTER IX

THE FLIGHT IN THE DARK

DUGGLEBY'S two friends had me in a grip which no man not a Hercules could break.

In the light of calm reflection, it is easy to see how my keen-eyed enemy had been able to spring his trap with such certainty of success. He had no doubt detected the interest the French doctor was taking in me, long before I received the offer of aid on the visiting card.

He had recognized in the doctor a man of exceptional intelligence, and had not made the mistake of leaving him out of his calculations. He had, no doubt, guessed that a French gentleman, in full evening dress, would not have been likely to come to Coney Island by so plebeian a method of transportation as the elevated railway or the Iron Steamboat. A half hour's search among the garages at the Island would have sufficed to verify his guess and locate the doctor's automobile.

Then, when, from his position at the door, he had seen the signal pass between the Frenchman

and me, he had done an audacious, but perfectly reasonable thing. He had withdrawn his two friends from their now unnecessary watch at the other entrances to the building, and the three of them together had lain in wait in the dark little alley where they were sure we would come out of our own accord.

Duggleby's own automobile, a big red American car, stood alongside the trim gray demi-limousine Panhard which was waiting for us.

Duggleby himself had taken no part in my capture, and stood drawing on his gloves, ready to mount to his seat at the steering wheel. He was disposed to be ironically polite to the doctor.

"This gentleman is going to ride with us," he said, nodding to me. "I am sorry to deprive you of his company, but I expect to enjoy it greatly myself."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. His manner expressed a slight shade of annoyance, but nothing more than that, and his words made my heart sink like lead.

"I have no serious claim to oppose to that of monsieur," said he, "especially since his seems so pressing."

Then he turned to me with another shrug, and an expressive little gesture of his hands. He spoke to me in French, and everything about his man-

ner and his inflection seemed to indicate that he was making a polite apology for leaving me in the lurch. But his words were:

"Be of good heart; when I range alongside, be ready."

As he turned away, he made a small blunder, or what looked like it, which, after the perfect sang-froid he had shown in his connection with the whole affair, took us all a little by surprise.

He turned and made as if to enter Duggleby's car instead of his own. Then, perceiving his mistake with some appearance of embarrassment, he turned away and clambered into the Panhard.

Simultaneously, I was bundled, with scant ceremony, into the tonneau of Duggleby's car, his two friends taking their positions one on either side of me.

"No!" said Duggleby emphatically, in answer to the whispered suggestion from one of his friends, "it's no use, I tell you; we can't tie him. How should we go through town like that? Keep your shoulders behind his; that's all that's necessary."

The doctor's chauffeur was still cranking unsuccessfully at the Panhard as we shot out of the alley and into the broad, almost deserted street. The plight of the French car seemed to afford some amusement to my two captors in the tonneau.

"He won't get away in a hurry," said one.

"Trust Duggleby for that," said the other.

"What was it he did to it?"

The first man leaned behind me and whispered hoarsely behind his hand:

"The cock between the gasoline tank and the—" he began, but his beery whisper, which was easily audible to me, had reached Duggleby's ears also.

"Shut up, you fool," he said.

The epithet would have applied with equal truth to both these young men who held me prisoner between them. All I had to fear from either of them, it was clear, was their muscles. There was silence until Duggleby himself broke it.

"Do you know?" he asked—"I don't suppose you care to tell me, but you really might as well—do you know why the doctor pretended to make a mistake so that he could get a look into my car?"

None of us answered; he laughed shortly.

"You want a name to be called by, do you? Well, then, do you know, Mr. Andrew Meiklejohn?"

Of course he had no idea that he could get any information from me, even if I had it. I think his only purpose in addressing me at all was, if possible, to engage me in conversation. He must

have been intensely curious as to what sort of thoughts and memories were in my head. Even a deliberate attempt to mislead him might reveal much. So I maintained an unbroken silence.

He drove that car, as I imagine he did everything else, with a fine blend of judgment and audacity, and a very high degree of manual skill. Fields, hedges, buildings, clumps of trees, were pouring past us in a confusion which proclaimed, all too plainly, the speed at which we were running.

Up over our heads the big arc lamps which lighted the driveway rushed over us like an orderly procession of comets. If we kept up that pace it seemed unlikely that any car in the world would ever range alongside; but I kept up my courage and blindly pinned my faith to the doctor.

Suddenly I became aware that I could see my own shadow on the polished back of the seat in front of me. The arc lamps overhead could not cast that shadow. It could only come from a light near the level of the road, from the searchlight of an automobile. Slowly the shadow grew more distinct, as the light which defined it became brighter.

Fast as we were flying, a silent gray car behind us on the road was flying faster still.

I did not turn my head, did not move my quietly

relaxed body in the smallest degree, but every nerve, every muscle, every thought, every faculty of mind and body was ready. I found it easy to be of good heart now. Neither of the two men beside me appeared to notice anything. One of them, indeed, seemed half asleep. But the man at the wheel was alert enough to make up for it.

The first flash of silver light on the corner of his mud guard, of a light that could only come from behind, was enough to tell him the whole story. He did not turn his head any more than I did.

"Look out behind, one of you," he commanded, "and see if you can see anything."

At that, both men turned with a start.

"There's a pair of headlights," said one, "coming down the road after us, to beat hell."

"Is it the Panhard or is it not?" demanded Duggleby. "That's what I want to know."

"It don't say anything about that on the headlight," replied my other guard, "but he's burning up the road all right. We're not exactly standing still ourselves."

We were going so fast that the pressure of air on our faces made it difficult to breathe, and the man's words were torn from his mouth and blown away, like a smoke wreath in a hurricane. But with all our speed the reflection on the polished

seat in front of me grew brighter and brighter. How that car was rushing on!

My two guards, breathless, hatless, were craning around to look. They seemed to have quite forgotten me. I never stirred from my upright position between their knees, never moved my head, never took my gaze from the shadow of myself on the seat in front.

Its position with reference to my own made it perfectly clear that the car was coming up exactly behind us, which seemed a curious thing to do if it hoped to pass. I suspect the maneuver puzzled young Duggleby not a little, for he asked irritably:

"What's he doing back there? Can't you make out?"

Before either of them could answer, I saw my shadow move suddenly to the right. Our pursuer was pulling out to the left, with the evident intention of passing us. The new position of the shadows told Duggleby exactly what it had told me. It was the move that he had been expecting, and he was ready for it. Our car deflected to the left also.

The next moment, by a trick of steering which would have done honor to a prize contestant for the Gordon-Bennett cup, a trick which would have spelled instant disaster had it not been executed with consummate skill, the driver of the pursuing

car made a sharp reverse curve and ranged alongside of us on the right.

The two men in the tonneau with me were gasping in plain undisguised terror. The car was passing us so close, even at that appalling rate of speed, that the hubs of our wheels could hardly have been three inches apart.

"Be ready when I range alongside."

That sentence of the doctor's was ringing in my mind. Well, I was ready, and one or more long seconds would probably reveal to me what I was to be ready for.

Suddenly the man at my right uttered a horrified outcry, and in that instant I saw an uplifted hand shoot out from the limousine, a hand that held, poised and ready to deal a terrible blow, a heavy steel spanner.

The thought in all our minds at that instant was that the doctor meant to brain Duggleby with it as he passed by. If he did, that blow would kill five men. At the pace we were going, at least, it would be a miracle if any one of us in either car escaped alive.

The blow fell, but not upon Duggleby's defenseless head.

I knew now why the doctor had wanted a look at the dashboard of the big American car. The spanner fell, with terrific force, upon the little

mahogany box containing the spark coil and vibrators, wrecking it utterly. There would not be another explosion in one of Duggleby's cylinders that night. The car would keep going on just so long as its momentum lasted, and not another foot. Already our speed was slackening rapidly.

I have said my two captors had forgotten all about me in the excitement of the moment. When the blow fell, I was braced for the effect of it, and thrust myself sharply backward. Duggleby's command that my guards should keep their shoulders behind mine had not been lost on me. But it had apparently been lost on them. The sudden slackening of our speed and their curiosity to see what had happened, combined to make them lean far forward.

In that instant, Duggleby showed his true mettle. He did something that neither the doctor nor I had foreseen, something that, except for the stupidity of his two friends, might have foiled the doctor's plan for my rescue.

Across the road, in the shadow of the trees, a narrow driveway, flanked by two heavy stone pillars, led into what appeared to be a large private yard, surrounded by a high brick wall. A second after the blow was struck which disabled his car, Duggleby turned sharp to the left and made for this driveway.

For a moment it looked as though we were to be dashed to pieces against the farther pillar; but the man at the wheel had calculated better than that. The thing was only just possible, but he made it. The doctor's chauffeur, evidently unprepared for such a maneuver, was holding straight on down the road.

Duggleby's plan was at once apparent. Before the doctor's car could be stopped, and before he and the chauffeur could come in pursuit of us, I was to be dragged out of the car, tapped on the head with something heavy, if necessary, and hidden away in the woods behind the house. In the game of hide and seek which would ensue, the odds would be in my enemy's favor again.

But, as it happened, I was ready, and my two guards were not. I was pressed against the back of the tonneau seat, and they were both leaning forward when our car made its unexpected and violent swing to the left. That alone would have been enough to throw them off their balance for a moment, but I did not rely on that. Seizing the man at my left about the waist, I flung him with all my might against his fellow, who went halfway out of the car with the violence of the shock.

Then, like a flash, I sprang to my feet on the seat of the tonneau and vaulted out behind into the road. Of course I had a bad fall, but that was

only to be expected. In a second I was on my feet again.

Before Duggleby knew what had happened, I was outside the gate and running down the road to meet the doctor, who was already coming back for me. In two minutes more I was leaning back among the luxurious cushions of the Panhard, and skimming like a bird toward Brooklyn.

My Frenchman leaned forward and spoke to the chauffeur:

"Drive a little slower," he said; "there is no hurry in the world, and I dislike reckless driving extremely."

Then, with a smile, he leaned back beside me.

CHAPTER X

MONSIEUR BARRAS

I EXPECTED my rescuer to begin at once plying me with questions, and somewhat wearily I rallied my wits and prepared to answer them. I soon found, however, how far I had underrated the tact and the consideration of the French doctor.

"Oh, of course I am curious," he said, as if he had read my thoughts, "but my curiosity can wait. You're not to talk at all until I give you leave. Just lean back and take it easy."

I was only too glad to obey him, and I never even looked out to see where we were going, until at last the car stopped at what appeared to be his destination. Then I looked up and laughed a little.

"Well?" said the doctor interrogatively.

"This is the Holland House, is it not?" said I. "I happened to give that address as mine to a pawnbroker two weeks ago. Why the words came into my head then, or why I recognize this as the Holland House now, I don't know."

A liveried lackey was opening the door for us, but the doctor, who was sitting nearest the door, did not at once move to dismount. He leaned forward first and spoke to the chauffeur, addressing him in French.

"You may tell the consul general, with my compliments," he said, "that you are unquestionably a jewel of the first water. There is no doubt in my mind that he has in his employ the finest automobile driver in America. When I see him tomorrow, I shall dilate on that theme at length," with which words he handed the man a gold piece.

"You are quite right," I said in confirmation, "I never saw such a piece of driving in my life."

I think my appearance must have shocked even the doctor when he first saw me in the light, and its effect upon the staid and dignified servitors of the hotel was simply indescribable. Nothing but the commanding authority of the doctor's air would ever have got me through the lobby, into the elevator, and up to his suite, without challenge.

I was hatless, and still wore the clothes with which the Irish pawnbroker had supplied me. They had been shabby enough when we left the saloon at Coney Island, and my fall in the road from Duggleby's automobile had completed their ruin. They just held together upon me, and that was all. I had sustained some minor scratches

and abrasions about the face and hands, at the same time, and dusty clots of blood here and there about me completed the picture of calamity which I presented.

Once he had got me safe into his room and into an easy chair, the doctor ran his hands over me with a practiced touch, then rang for his valet. He absolutely forbade me to attempt any explanations or to ask any questions whatever. He and the valet, between them, got me out of my rags, into a warm bath and thence to bed; and I must have been asleep before my head fairly touched the pillow.

The next thing I knew it was broad day. The doctor, standing with his back to me, was gazing meditatively out of the window. When I spoke to him he wheeled around, cast a brief, though searching glance over me, and remarked:

"No need to ask you how you are. Do you realize that you are an extremely resilient young man?"

"I will confess to being a hungry one," said I.

"Naturally," he observed, "since it is three o'clock in the afternoon."

He promptly telephoned for luncheon, ordering it served in his sitting room; and until I had finished eating it, did most of the talking himself, amusing me greatly with his impressions of his

brief visit to America, with conversation about everything under the sun, in fact, except the subject of myself.

I was aware all the time that nothing I said or did escaped his close, intelligent scrutiny, but the manner of it made it pleasant rather than otherwise.

When at last, clad in a suit of his silk pajamas and a Japanese kimono, I leaned back in my easy chair and lighted one of his exquisite cigarettes, he brought the subject of our conversation suddenly around to myself.

"I will confess," he said, "that at eleven o'clock last night I thought myself too old and too wise ever to hope to find another completely insoluble enigma. But you have baffled me at every point. Every theory that I have formed concerning you has promptly broken down. I am as excited about you as a ten-year-old boy about a box of chemicals. Are you going to be able to solve yourself?"

"No," said I. "I hoped you were going to do it for me. But it won't take me very long to tell you all I know about myself. I mean that literally," I went on. "All I know, every memory, every conscious memory, that is inside my head I can tell you in the course of an hour."

"Good!" said the doctor; "go ahead."

I was about to begin my narrative when I thought of something better.

"In one of the pockets of that vile bundle of rags you stripped me of last night, you will find the whole thing written down. I did that because I no longer regard my memory as a very safe depository."

"Written in English?" asked the doctor quickly.

"Yes," said I, "I had no idea I could talk French until I heard you talking it."

"Better and better," said the doctor; and in two minutes he was lost in the eager perusal of the manuscript which makes up the first chapters of this story of mine.

For perhaps a quarter of an hour after he had finished reading, he sat in a profound abstraction, smoothing out the pages of my manuscript with his nervous fingers. It was with a good deal of difficulty that I suppressed the questions that were trembling on my lips.

At last he looked up at me, with a smile of singular charm.

"I have asked a great deal of you," he said at last, "and have given you a very little in return. Nothing, in fact, beyond what you may have inferred, and what small information you could get from my visiting card. That told

you that I am a physician. I may add that I am a man of——"

He hesitated a moment; then, conquering a modesty which he regarded as false, went on straightforwardly—"a man of some reputation as a scientific investigator; that my studies have been along the line of abnormal psychology, diseases of the mind from the most serious and fatal, down to the—no, I cannot use the word 'trifling' regarding any of them. And you will not misunderstand me, I hope, nor think it indicates any lack of sympathy for you as a human being in deep distress, when I say that as a 'case' you give promise of being one of the most curious and stimulating in all my experience. I am absolutely delighted with you."

He shot a quick glance into my face to detect, if possible, the effect of his words upon me.

"You want to ask me something," he said; "go ahead."

"You can guess, I think, after reading that manuscript of mine. Am I mad indeed, or am I sane? In trying to find out the identity of the man I was, am I pouring water into a sieve? building a house with cards? Am I to live momentarily in dread of the same obliterating hand that has once been laid upon me?"

His eyes glowed with purely human sympathy.

I was not a case to him then, I was a man; I felt sure of that. Yet his manner, when he spoke, was quite detached, quite impersonal.

"In the first place," he said, "as you sit there talking to me now, the machinery of your mind works as perfectly as mine. It has worked absolutely without a flaw from the first moment of our acquaintance. This manuscript in my hand shows a far more normal mind than that of many a man high in the world's affairs. Your handwriting, all your physical reactions that I have had the opportunity of observing are those of a man in perfect health of mind and body. You may be sure I should not have taken you so completely into my confidence regarding your own case if this were not true."

"Then," I said, "you pronounce me a perfectly sane, normal man?"

He laughed.

"If you were that," said he, "I should have no interest in you at all, except as an exceedingly pleasant acquaintance whom I have been instrumental in rescuing from embarrassment. I cannot pretend for a moment that you are normal." He leaned forward and went on somewhat more rapidly:

"You recognized this building instantly when we stopped before it last night. Have you any

recollection of ever having been here before? You remarked that my friend's chauffeur had done the finest piece of driving that you had ever seen. Can you recall a single instance when you have ever ridden in a motor car before last night? You recognized the face of Monsieur Duggleby, the face of the woman in the cab, but your own, which you see in the mirror every day, is totally unfamiliar. Yet your mind, in dealing with affairs of the present, is sane enough; perfectly enough balanced to make it safe for you to face the situation as it stands."

"And do you believe," I asked, "that I shall ever succeed in putting these two parts of myself together?"

"Oh, let us not ask for prophecies," he said, "nor look for miracles. It's much healthier to look back over the progress you have already made. Think how much you have learned by sheer observation and deduction, in the little more than two weeks that have elapsed since you asked that first question of the man who was dozing at the other end of the bench in Dr. Berry's asylum."

I rose and extended my hand to him.

"Thank you," said I. "I will at least keep up the fight. If patience and courage can win it, I will win."

"Now," said he, after I had relinquished his

hand, "listen to what I have to propose: I want your permission to make your case my life work until I have solved it. I am returning to France in two or three days—on Wednesday, to be exact. I wish to take you with me. I cannot remain here, nor, so long as that very resourceful young Monsieur Duggleby is at large, can you remain here, either, with safety.

"Besides that, I am strongly inclined to think that in France you will find more of the materials which go to make up your lost past than you can discover in America. I reached that conclusion largely, though not entirely, from the perfection of your French speech. I have an extremely sensitive ear; yet not a sentence, an idiom, an inflection of yours has ever rung false upon it."

I was profoundly moved.

"I did not know there was such kindness in the world," said I. "Yet I am afraid I cannot do as you suggest."

He wheeled upon me suddenly.

"As you are a sane man, monsieur, give me a reason, one serious reason."

"There is an obvious one," said I. "I have no money."

He frowned with the first appearance of displeasure he had shown.

"I am not drumming up trade," he said.

"Neither had I in mind any fees for your professional services. It was the ordinary expenses of my daily life that I was thinking about. I have nothing. Except for that impossible bundle of rags over there, I am literally naked."

"On the other hand," said he, "I have the good fortune to be rich—oh, not as you Americans understand the word, but plenty rich enough. I am a bachelor, never having had time to marry in my youth, and now that I find my hair turning gray, I am forced to confess to occasional moments of loneliness. Both as a human companion and as quite the most interesting psychological specimen I have found, you will roll a load of years off my back. Come! Is it agreed?"

Still I was silent; and then his quick wit divined the true cause of my hesitation.

"Ah! the lady in the cab?" said he.

I nodded feebly.

"Duggleby is her enemy as well as mine," said I, "and after the display of his resources with which he favored us last night, I dread more than ever leaving her to the machinations of himself and that precious father of his."

"Answer me," commanded the doctor, with a smile. "Which of these two weapons would young Monsieur Duggleby find the more formidable, quixotic chivalry or plain common sense?

How much tangible service can you render that young lady in your present condition? It is not you as you stand to-day; it is your lost self, the self you must find, who will be able to be of assistance to her. If you remain here and permit your enemy to turn you over into the hands of that villain who calls himself a doctor—have you thought of that, my friend?—you will leave her defenseless, indeed."

He was so clearly right about it, that I yielded without further demur.

"I can't begin to thank you," said I.

"Don't," he said; "no thanks are necessary. As I have already explained to you, our arrangement is perfectly reciprocal."

Then he allowed his smiling gaze to travel over me, from head to foot.

"A pair of scissors for your hair and beard," he said; "that my valet can furnish you at once. Clothing—that will have to wait, in your puritanical New York, until to-morrow morning when the shops open. Your passage to Paris, that I can contrive to engage to-night. What remains?"

"It seems to me a fairly exhaustive catalogue," said I, "already."

"No, no," he said, "there was something else; I had thought of it a moment ago. Ah, I have it! A name!"

He led me over to the mirror.

" Monsieur," he said, bowing with playful ceremony, " I do myself the honor to present to you Monsieur—Monsieur Simon Barras."

" I am honored, indeed," said I, bowing to the figure in the glass; " I trust our acquaintance may prove a pleasant one."

" *Soit,*" said the doctor.

CHAPTER XI

SUCH STUFF AS DREAMS ARE MADE OF

THAT was Sunday. By Tuesday night my transformation from a nameless waif of a Coney Island music hall into Monsieur Barras, nephew (for that was the relationship we had decided upon) to the famous French physician, was complete.

I was surprised and somewhat amused to find how deep the transformation went. Of course it is true that clothes do not make the man, but they can make a much larger part of him than is generally admitted. When the Frenchman's valet had attended to my hair and beard, when the tailor, the haberdasher, the bootmaker, had all added their quota to the equipment of a well-to-do young gentleman of France, I found I felt the part as well as looked it.

The doctor came into my room just before dinner-time on Tuesday evening, and surprised me before the glass.

"Will it do?" I asked him.

" Perfectly, perfectly," he said with enthusiasm. " You talk French now with your shoulders and your hands as well as with your voice. Absolutely, there is no flaw about you anywhere."

He had been absent from the hotel since early morning, and I commented on that fact.

" I am afraid," said I, " that with my affairs sandwiched in among your other engagements, you must have found these last days uncomfortably busy."

" I had no other engagements worthy of the name," said he. " I have merely been idling here in New York. But you, my young friend, have kept me busy indeed. I have spent two days studying over you at the Astor Library."

" Indeed," said I, " I didn't know that the medical library at the Astor——"

" Medical library! " he interrupted; " I have been reading the files of the *New York Tribune,* assisted by that useful little volume the ' Tribune Index.' "

" I see," said I, " you took the name of Duggleby for a clew, and worked out from that. You should have let me help you. I could have borrowed a suit of your clothes to go to the Astor in."

" That was exactly what I did not want you to do," he said. " I have already a clew to your

identity which I think may lead somewhere, but I would not hint to you what it is for the world."

"I am afraid I don't understand you," said I, a little puzzled, and possibly just the least bit nettled, too.

"You shall know in good time," he assured me. "Meanwhile, I am anxious to try some experiments. They will be valuable so long as you are relying on your instincts and your memories for the past. The moment you begin to be influenced by the seeming probability that you are this person or that, your instinct will become corrupted by an irresistible tendency to try to make a case, and my experiments will be nearly valueless."

"I see," I assented somewhat ruefully. "You mean to be sure of getting the truth from me, whether it entirely destroys the fabric of the case you have been building up, or not."

"Precisely," said he. "Furthermore, if ever I betray, by my way of asking a question, the sort of answer that I wish or expect, you must utterly disregard that involuntary hint."

Naturally, I was extremely curious as to what form these experiments would take, but I saw that he did not wish to be questioned in the matter, and resolutely attempted to dismiss all speculation upon the subject from my mind.

His preparation for one of them, I could not help observing. We were to sail from the White Star pier at one o'clock, yet he asked me to be dressed and ready at eleven. I was sure that this unusual allowance of time was not due to any excessive precaution against our being late.

There were two cabs at the entrance when we came out, a four-wheeler, with all our luggage piled upon it, into which the doctor consigned the valet, with instructions to drive straight to the pier.

Our own vehicle was an electric hansom, and it the doctor commanded to drive north. We rolled rapidly up the Avenue to the Park entrance, crossed over to Central Park West, where we rode north to Seventieth; turned west again, and finally again turned north on West End Avenue.

The doctor's only instructions to me were to keep my mind as blank as possible, and, above all, not to try to remember things nor to recognize them. If they came into my mind of their own accord, well and good; but I was not to attempt to push my discoveries farther than they would go of themselves.

Finally, at a signal from the doctor, our cab stopped before a large, fashionable, modern house.

" Come," said he, " I have no great confidence that my friend Monsieur Vidal is at home, but if

he is, we shall have time for a few minutes' call upon him."

We ascended the steps together, and the doctor rang the bell. When the butler opened the door he stepped promptly inside and presented one of his cards together with one of my own. I may say, in parenthesis, that the doctor had not forgotten that detail in the equipment of his new nephew.

"Monsieur Vidal is at home, is he not?" said the doctor.

The butler looked blank. "What name did you say, sir?" he asked.

"Monsieur Vidal, Monsieur Hector Vidal," said the doctor in apparent surprise.

"You must have mistaken the address, sir," said the man respectfully; "he does not live here, nor, so far as I know, in the block."

"I have made an extremely stupid blunder," said the doctor; "thank you."

As he preceded me out of the door, I thought I heard him give a short laugh, which seemed compounded of amusement and annoyance about equally. A young man was running up the steps; to my extreme astonishment he was no less a person than my would-be abductor of a few nights previous, Mr. Alexander Duggleby.

He seemed as astonished as I was. The doctor

alone of the three of us preserved an attitude of perfect composure.

Young Duggleby had only cast the briefest sort of a glance at me, and, as was natural enough, had failed utterly to recognize me. He was looking at the doctor with an ironical smile, which could not wholly veil a certain grudging admiration.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," he was saying; "can't I prevail on you to come back into the house, you and your—friend?"

With that half-amused smile still on his lips, he turned toward me, as he included me in the invitation. The smile disappeared. He stared at me a moment in perfectly blank astonishment, and then, as he recognized me, a look of downright hatred spread over his handsome face.

The doctor remained quite unmoved. If his hand tightened a little on the walking stick he carried, the action was not perceptible.

"My nephew," he corrected politely, "Monsieur Simon Barras. I am sorry we cannot accept your invitation, sir."

Young Duggleby stood rooted where he was on the steps. We got into our hansom and began to roll smoothly away. Looking back through the little window, we could see him standing there when we rounded the corner, the look of vindictive hatred still upon his face.

"Of course the object of my experiment is apparent to you now," said the doctor, as we sped on toward the steamer pier; "I wished to see if you recognized the Duggleby house. I was watching you rather closely, and I think you did not. Am I right?"

"Yes," said I, "it was quite unfamiliar to me."

"The encounter with Monsieur Duggleby," he went on, "was quite unlooked for. I had even taken the precaution of making sure he was out of the house before we started."

"Well," said I, "there is no serious harm done, is there?"

"I am not sure," said the doctor thoughtfully; "he is a resourceful young man—most resourceful."

I was more than ever inclined to agree with the doctor an hour or two later when, standing upon the promenade deck, watching with interest the process of getting the marine leviathan away from her berth, I saw among the crowd on the pier that had assembled to see us off, the figure of the young man in question. I pointed him out to the doctor.

"Yes," said he thoughtfully, "we are by no means done with him."

We had almost continuous rough weather, but as the doctor and I were excellent sailors, this fact

did not detract from our pleasure in the voyage. Indeed, if anything, it added to it, for it left us the decks pretty much to ourselves, and we had too much to think about and discuss to care for other companionship. Before we left the Hook, our ship settled into a steady roll, which drove perhaps three fourths of the passengers below, and many of them never emerged on deck until we had sighted land again.

The doctor and I spent our days either in buffeting with the wind and spray on the weather side of the deck, or in chatting and dozing in our steamer chairs in a sheltered corner.

I found the light, half slumber, such as one takes in a steamer chair, more conducive to dreams than the heavier sleep of the night. In fact, my day dreams soon came to have an almost regular place in our daily programme. Some days, for hours at a stretch, I would waken from one dream adventure, tell it to the doctor, and drift off forthwith into another.

"They are curiously difficult to classify, these reminiscences of yours, whether you're awake or asleep," he said with a puzzled air, one day. "You seem to sweep pretty much the whole gamut of society. You dream of squalid streets, of hungry children, of lurid places full of smoke and flame and half-naked men toiling in them, and the next

moment you jump to what appears, from the description, to be a French chateau; and you are no better when you are awake. You were sure the Irish pawnbroker knew you, yet you instinctively gave your address as the Holland House. Oh, it will all fit in, I dare say, but it makes the puzzle a complicated one."

A moment later he asked, quite unexpectedly:

"By the way, do you feel particularly at home aboard ship? I mean, is there anything about marine architecture that strikes you as particularly familiar?"

"You are thinking of the Morton-Duggleby shipyard, I suppose," I said.

"No inferences," he said quickly.

"Well," I said, "I do know my way about, but I fancy my familiarity is no more than a few trips as a passenger in transatlantic liners would give me."

"How did you ever hear of the Morton-Duggleby shipyard?" he asked.

"I read about it in a magazine," said I; "something about building a battleship."

"Well, don't read any more magazines," he said, almost irritably, "until we get to Paris. The ones you will find there won't do you any harm."

That was our last day out, a much calmer one, by the way, than any we had had previously, and for the first time my view of the horizon was

interrupted by a steady procession of passing figures.

The doctor resumed his reading, and presently I dozed off to sleep. The dream that came to me in that half-submerged slumber was one I shall never forget. It was nothing much to tell about, but its amazing vividness and the thing that happened immediately upon my waking from it, are enough to write it indelibly across my memory.

I was in a small, very plainly furnished room, kept with extraordinary neatness, which evidently served as a general living room for more than one person. A simple supper, with places laid for three, was spread in the center of it, beneath a shaded lamp. I was seated at a small, upright piano in the corner of the room, and at my right hand, and facing me, She sat, the lady of my dreams, the girl whose face I had seen through the cab window.

There was an anxious look in her face, and at last, giving over pretending not to notice it, I stopped playing.

"Don't worry about it, Virginia," said I; and that was the first time in all those dreams that ever I had found a name for her. What "it" was, I did not know.

"I know," she said, "I shouldn't; at least I shouldn't let him see I am worrying."

Before I could answer her, we heard a step on the stairs.

"There he comes," she said, and then called out, with assumed gayety:

"Supper's been waiting for you ever so long, father. I am in doubt if I will give you any."

It was an old man who entered, an old man with a long gray beard, and the sight of his face horrified me. It was blazing with anger, but beneath the anger I could see, strongly marked, the lines of despair.

"They have tried to steal my secret," he cried. "They rifled my laboratory last night."

I wakened at that, and sleepily sat half erect in my steamer chair. Then, with a start, I leaned forward, sank back again, and rubbed my hand over my eyes. Had I truly wakened after all?

There, passing right in front of me, was the man with the long gray beard. A woman was walking beside him, on the side away from me, where I could see no more of her than an elbow and a wind-blown skirt. Trembling so that I could hardly stand, I, nevertheless, managed to get to my feet and look after them.

She was there! Virginia, the woman of my dreams. Unless, indeed, I was dreaming still, or unless—unless I was mad, after all.

CHAPTER XII

THE ORDEAL

I TURNED to the doctor, my face working with uncontrollable agitation.

"Do you see them?" I asked wildly, "those two figures walking there? An old man and his daughter?"

"Yes, certainly I see them," said the doctor quietly. "Why not?"

"And they have been here all the while, passengers on board this ship with us? It is impossible!"

"Not at all," said the doctor. "We are seeing plenty of new faces to-day. The bad weather has kept them below, that's all. Do you recognize them?"

He spoke with as little apparent interest as though we had been talking about the weather. But it would have taken more than a quiet manner to calm the mad whirl of my thoughts just then.

"I was dreaming of them," said I, "dreaming of Virginia and her father, and then I opened my eyes and saw them standing before me."

"Is she the young lady you have dreamed about before?" he asked calmly. Then, as I only stared at him, he added:

"You had never told me her name."

I dropped back limp in my chair.

"I suppose I couldn't have told you her name before," said I. "It came to me in the dream and I repeated it unconsciously."

From a pocket in his coat the doctor drew out a passenger list, and began a methodical examination of it.

"There is a Miss Virginia on board, certainly. Her father's name is Heatherfield. Does that bring anything back to you?"

"No," said I, and my voice broke in a sob of despair.

"Softly, softly," said the doctor; "we are not asking for miracles, you know. When your memories classify themselves and become consistent, my task will be done. Be glad of the name you know, and don't despair over the one you have forgotten. The fact that you don't know your own doesn't trouble you."

He broke off abruptly, for a deck steward stood before us, offering beef tea. I shook my head in refusal of it, but the doctor ruled otherwise.

"Drink it," he said, "and then get yourself

together. I want you composed to try an experiment."

"What is it?" I asked unsteadily; but already I was doing his bidding.

"Simply to indulge in a short promenade here on the deck with me," he answered.

As I foresaw, we set out in a direction opposite to that taken by the two figures of my dream, and the object of the experiment was to see if we could detect in them any corresponding recognition of me. I felt my whole fate was hanging in the balance; the whole question, whether I was essentially a sane man or a lunatic. If they knew me, then, of course, I was a sane man. More than that, it would mean that my search for my lost identity was at an end, or practically so.

The other alternative, I hardly dared contemplate. If they were to walk past me on the deck without a sign, it would make it almost certain that my identification of them with persons who had belonged in my almost obliterated past was the mere delusion of a madman.

They were coming down the deck toward us now. Rapidly the distance was narrowed, to ten paces, to five. Now we were almost face to face; and now I was searching those faces with an eagerness that must almost have cried aloud from my agonized eyes.

For an instant her glance rested on my face. A very faint flush colored her cheeks. Her finely marked, expressive brows moved a little with disdainful annoyance under my undisguised stare. And that was all.

They were gone! In her mind I figured at this moment simply as an underbred, impertinent young person, who stared in an unmannerly way at pretty girls.

The doctor's strong, steady arm locked itself in mine to give me support, and God knows I needed it.

I walked on stiffly like an automaton. When we got opposite where our chairs were, I stopped, but the doctor, with a light pressure on my arm, signified that I was to keep on walking.

"Not again," I said; "I can't do it again."

"Think a minute," said he. "Think how your appearance must be changed. You look like an authentic Frenchman; you are walking with one whose authenticity cannot be denied. You have a French name on the passenger list. Don't look at them when we meet again, but talk, talk to me casually, about anything at all. Tell me how you escaped from Dr. Berry's asylum, or how you played the piano at Coney Island. And talk in English," he added, after a moment's pause. "I had nearly forgotten that detail myself."

Again they were approaching us down the deck.

"Don't look at them," he repeated; "trust me for that."

Somehow, I do not know how, I managed to rally my faculties for this second ordeal. I felt myself moving forward with the casual gait of a mere stroller upon the deck. I found myself talking in English, though I have no idea at all what it was I said. Again, the distance narrowed between us. Still my voice kept its even, casual, conversational accent.

The doctor often said that we must not ask for miracles, but certainly he asked one from me then, and some power gave me the ability to perform it. Owing to the direction of the wind, they had come within two paces of us before the sound of my voice fairly reached their ears.

When it did, they stopped with one accord, and now it was they who stared, stared as if it had been the figure of one long dead that stood before them. I did not look, could not look, for the whole world was whirling around me in a mad reel.

The gentle compulsion of the doctor's arm walked me on, and in a second we had passed them. He has told me since, though I find it difficult to believe, that my voice never broke; that the even flow of my narrative never faltered until they were out of hearing, behind us.

"Well," said the doctor, as we dropped into our chairs again, "that is settled. Those people know you, the real you that we are trying to find. I would raise my hand in affirmation of that before a crucifix."

For once his quiet professional reserve had melted. There was a thrill of excitement in his voice which matched my own. He drew a little flask of cognac from his pocket.

"Here," he said, "I think we both deserve a little drink on the strength of that."

Presently, however, he undertook to moderate a little the transports of hope which the look in my face and the excited inflection of my voice betrayed.

"Don't promise yourself too much," he said. "Don't think that this mystery of yours is going to be solved in the twinkling of an eye. To do that is simply to court disappointment."

"But they know me," I insisted vehemently; "you yourself admit as much, said you would swear to it. You cannot believe that they would refuse to tell?"

He made no reply, and after a moment of silence I went on:

"Unless you believe that they, like the Dugglebys, are among the number of my enemies; unless you believe that that girl, a girl who looks out on the world with those eyes, could bear a deliberate

part in the conspiracy to rob me of myself, and that's unthinkable."

Still he was silent.

"Isn't it unthinkable?" I persisted.

"Oh, yes," he said, "but it is not the only alternative."

"I can conceive of no other."

"It is possible," he said thoughtfully, "that this Mr. Heatherfield and his daughter regard you, in turn, as one of their enemies."

"How could that be?" I demanded.

"When I know that," he said gravely, "I shall know your secret."

"At any rate," he went on, "you can hardly go to this gentleman and ask him if he will not be good enough to tell you your own name. The situation requires tact and some slight preliminary acquaintance. Remember, too, that we expect to land within a few hours.

"I am not trying to discourage you," he concluded, seeing how my face had fallen at these considerations. "We have really made an inestimable gain, but I do not want you to be disheartened in case the solution of your problem should prove to be not quite the simple matter that it looks."

In spite of the obvious wisdom of his counsels, it was some little time before I could bring myself to the point of accepting them.

The course we finally agreed upon was that I should wait for a chance to approach Mr. Heatherfield when he was alone, and begin a conversation with him, after the manner of casual deck acquaintances. If I could succeed in doing this, and should find him kindly disposed toward me, then I might tell him as much of my story as was necessary, and ask him my great question.

Of course it was indispensable to such a programme that I should approach him at a moment when his daughter was not at his side. The two seemed to be absolutely inseparable, and one after another of the precious hours crept away, driving me almost into a frenzy of impatience, as they denied me the precious opportunity I sought.

Well along in the afternoon, however, when the sight of our tender approaching from the harbor at Cherbourg almost drove me to disregard the doctor's advice and chance everything on more drastic measures, at that final moment the opportunity came.

She left him to go in momentary search for something, and would doubtless be back almost before I could begin the conversation I hoped to draw him into. He was standing at the rail, gazing landward, with thoughtful eyes, troubled eyes I imagined, in an abstraction which it seemed an impertinence to break. Indeed, I took my place at

the rail beside him without his appearing to be aware of my presence.

"There is some compensation for our stormy voyage in a day like this," said I.

The sound of my voice and my presence there at his elbow seemed to startle him. The look he cast at me brought vividly to my memory the doctor's hypothesis that they might regard me as an enemy. He barely answered my question with a curt monosyllable, and turned as if to move away, but I had too much at stake to be easily discouraged.

"It is rather tantalizing, though, this pleasant day," I went on, "coming right at the end of the voyage as it does. It only serves to show us how many opportunities for pleasant acquaintanceship we have lost."

He wheeled upon me, dignified, irate, formidable.

"There are some of us, sir, who neither lament those lost opportunities, as you term them, nor desire to make up for them now."

His meaning was too pointed to be disregarded, yet in my despair at the thought of letting them go away out of my knowledge, carrying my secret with them, I made one more attempt. I dropped all pretense at merely casual conversation.

"I hope, sir," said I, very gravely, "that you

are not among those who feel that way, at least as regards myself. I have a most serious reason for wishing to become acquainted with you."

He gave me a long, searching look. Suspicion was fully alight in his eyes now, and anger spoke in the tone of his deep voice.

"If you do not know me already," he said, "if you are indeed the stranger to me that you wish to appear, then permit me to tell you that you are an impertinent intruder. If, on the other hand"—and now, though he lowered his voice, anger spoke louder in it than it had spoken in it before—yes, and dread, too—"if, on the other hand, you are the man whom I suspect you to be, a man who knows me well, then let me tell you that I know you, also, know you for the coward and knave that you are."

"Monsieur," said I, "my impertinence and my intrusion I can scarcely deny. It is so if you regard it so."

He was looking at me with a puzzled expression that caused me to interrupt myself. The next moment I realized that, in my excitement, I was speaking in French instead of English. I apologized, and repeated my words in a language he could understand.

"As to my being a coward and a knave," I concluded, "you can only have applied such terms to

me under a serious misapprehension. For my intrusion, since it has seemed such to you, I make my apology."

As I turned away to leave him, I found myself standing face to face with Virginia. In that moment, as our eyes met, there flashed across between them an instantaneous electrical recognition. It was literally papable. I felt it tingling clear to my finger tips, and I think she must have felt it, too, for a wave of glowing, transparent color came surging up into her face, bathing it from neck to forehead. When her eyes wavered away from mine and sought her father's, it was as if her will power had been barely sufficient to enable her to look away. But then, as suddenly as it had come, the glow died out and left her very pale, paler than she had been before. Her eyes widened with wonder, with dread, and yet it seemed to me, for the space of one heart beat, with hope as well, as she scanned her father's face and mine alternately.

It was absolutely impossible that I remain. Her father's reception of my advances settled that. I bowed gravely to him, and then to her as I took my leave; and as I did so, in that last glance at her, I saw that all the light had died out of her face, and in its stead had come a look of abstraction. It was as if I was forgotten—I and her

father, too; as if her thoughts had suddenly gone voyaging half a world away.

I had returned to my steamer chair and was in the act of reporting to the doctor the complete failure of my attempt, when he checked me with an imperative signal, and turning, I saw her coming toward us. Her manner made it plain that she was coming to speak to me, so I rose and went to meet her.

"I am afraid we owe you an apology, monsieur," she said, "or, perhaps, not so much an apology as an explanation. My father—" She hesitated an instant and glanced behind her, in evident apprehension lest he should come upon us in conversation together. Then she went on more collectedly: "My father has had many troubles of late, troubles heavier than a man of his age should be called upon to endure. He believes he owes them, or many of them, to a man whom we thought, whom I, at least, thought—dead." Her voice quivered a little over the word, and it was with obvious difficulty that she got it under control again.

"You have reminded my father—yes, and me, too—somewhat strongly of that man."

Her eyes were widening as she looked at me. "I am afraid," she went on breathlessly, "that that resemblance may have caused you some em-

barrassment. I hope that this explanation—will serve for an apology."

Had I been the cool, collected man I wished to be, I never would have uttered the question that rose to my lips; but standing there, face to face with her, her voice thrilling me with every word it uttered, I was far from cool.

"If," said I, "if I were indeed the man whom you thought dead——"

She caught her breath in a great gasp, and once more the color came blazing into her cheeks.

"You—you mean— But you cannot be that man! You cannot!"

And yet eyes and voice, the agonized questioning in her tone, belied the certainty of her assertion.

"If you were he—if you were that man whom I thought dead, you would not dare to stand before me now and look into my face, mine or my father's. Or if you did, if there was some reason which we do not understand——"

Her voice faltered and stopped, but her hands completed her meaning more expressively than any words could have done, for she had stretched them out to me, eager, imploring.

But the next instant, by sheer will power and with the aid of a couple of deep-drawn breaths, she recovered her self-control. Her hands

dropped to her sides and she forced a smile to her lips.

"I am afraid," she said, "I was very near repeating the offense I came to apologize for, but I will not make you suffer a second time for a chance resemblance of which you are as innocent as I. You will pardon us, monsieur?"

Before I could force an answer to my lips, she was gone, and I—I was left in a daze behind. I had found her, my dream girl. Every inflection of her beautiful voice doubled the strong assurance I had already.

I had found her! She was she, and I was I; and yet if that were true, I was her enemy. No, not I; the lost man I had been. Standing there with my elbows on the rail, I buried my face in my hands. But at last I roused myself.

"Thank God for the French doctor," said I. His strong, cool intelligence was the only stable thing in all my universe.

CHAPTER XIII

A CASTLE IN SPAIN

WE had not been in Paris half an hour before I satisfied the doctor that I knew the city, as he expressed it, "like the palm of my hand."

Almost every other minute during our long cab drive from the Gare du Nord to his apartment overlooking the Seine and the Quai St. Michel, I had recognized and instinctively called by their right names the interesting streets, squares, and public buildings of that lovely city.

The doctor hailed every one of these discoveries with a delight which showed me how seriously he would have been disappointed had I failed in this particular.

I put the capstone upon his enthusiasm when he told me that he was planning to dine at one of the restaurants on his way home. It was his usual practice, he said, for he detested dining in solitary state in his bachelor's apartment, which was the only home he possessed.

" In that case," said I, signaling the driver to stop, as I spoke the word, " we cannot do better than to dine right here."

The doctor laughed like a boy.

" No truer word was ever spoken," said he. For the place I had indicated was a little restaurant which makes up for its modest pretensions by a world-wide reputation among true epicures. The average tourist, with his nose in a Baedeker, goes by it without a glance.

When the serious business of ordering dinner was out of the way—and it may be noted that the doctor delegated this task to me—we settled down to talk over our plans for the future.

" Your evident knowledge of the city," said the doctor, " makes our course, for the next few days, at least, a plain one. I mean to leave you to yourself. I want you to assume the most irresponsible, care-free attitude of mind of which you are capable, and wander about the streets alone wherever your fancy or your instinct takes you."

" I don't know that I can guarantee the care-free mind," said I, " but I will do my best."

The doctor's eyes twinkled.

" It won't be so hard as you think," said he; " Paris is Paris, and you are a well-dressed, presentable young man with money in your pocket. From time immemorial, this city and young men,

such as I describe you to be, have proved mutually attractive. Don't seriously try to make discoveries, but when you see an omnibus that has a familiar look, climb up on the roof of it and ride until you feel like climbing down. When you hear the name of a place that sounds familiar, hop into a cab and drive there. That may seem a rather methodless course of procedure to you, but I shall be surprised if we do not develop something valuable that way."

"Likely enough," said I; "but it seems to me the time you allow for it is rather short. If you had said a month, I should feel more sanguine."

"That is quite true," said the doctor; "but by the end of the week I shall feel strongly disinclined to let you go wandering about this city without a companion."

"You mystify me completely," I exclaimed. "Why should Paris be safe for me the first week and unsafe thereafter?"

"There is too little mystery about it," he said. "We are quite sure, you and I, that we saw your friend Mr. Duggleby left safely behind us on the pier when the steamer sailed. We are quite sure that he did not take the same ship. No other fast ship sailed from New York till Saturday. Therefore, I think it very doubtful that any serious attempt will be made upon your personal safety be-

fore either Mr. Duggleby himself or a letter from him can reach Paris. He would hardly attempt to negotiate such a matter by cable. Allow that he or his letter reaches Paris next Sunday, and then add two or three days more for the delay he or his agents would probably experience in finding out your whereabouts, and you have the week of comparative security that I spoke of."

"Do you seriously imagine—" I began, but he interrupted me brusquely.

"I seriously think," he said, "that the only thing which can baffle us in our search for your lost identity, the only absolutely fatal blunder we could make, would result from a too-negligent dismissal of that very remarkable young man from our calculations. We can defeat him, we can outwit him, but a man who can sober himself out of an advanced state of intoxication by sheer will power, a man who can think quickly enough and act courageously enough to do the thing he did after I disabled his automobile that night on the road, that man is not one to be neglected."

I had a feeling, inevitable perhaps to one of the Anglo-Saxon temper of mind, that the doctor's estimate of young Duggleby was a little theatrical, even melodramatic, but a few moments' quiet thought, which his Gallic tact took care not to interrupt, convinced me that he was probably more

nearly right than I. His judgment, at any rate, would lead one to err on the safe side.

"Well," said I finally, "I promise you this: he may beat me, but if he does, it will be face to face. He shall never have another chance to pinion my arms from behind."

"Good," said the doctor. "And now as a reward for your docility, I will tell you something; I will tell you something which I hope will brighten a little the cloud which I have seen hanging over you like a thundercloud ever since we lost sight of the venerable Mr. Heatherfield and his charming daughter."

"You know where they are?" I asked quickly.

"Thanks to a little innocent eavesdropping, I do," he replied. "They are here in Paris. I know the address of the pension where they are stopping, and I infer from the fact that it is a pension instead of a hotel, that their stay will be of moderately long duration."

"Where is it?" I asked eagerly.

He smiled in a rather staid, elderly way over my enthusiasm.

"When one places a compass in a ship," he said, "one takes care not to place a magnet too near it. I want you to discover your own Paris, not to rotate in the orbit of a planet about a certain number on a certain street."

I was none too well pleased with his decision, but I saw the justice of it and said so.

"You are a good child," he said affectionately, "and you may be sure of this: I shall keep careful watch. If they change their place of residence, I shall know it. You shall not lose them again; you may trust me for that."

Three days later, over the same little table, in the same restaurant, I reported progress to the doctor. I had seen little of him in the interval, for the simple reason that I had spent every day, from early morning, or what passes for early morning in Paris, until late at night, which is very late indeed, in driving about the city in accordance with his instructions. As a result of this, I had come to a certain curious conclusion, of which I wished to inform the doctor.

"I have been a model tourist," said I. "I am confident that no man at present within the circle of the fortifications has spent so idly busy, or so busily idle, a three days. I have wandered from Père Lachaise to the Bois de Boulogne; from the Lion of Belfort to Montmartre. I have visited the Louvre and the Moulin Rouge, and pretty much everything that comes between. In the course of my wanderings, I have found what is, beyond doubt, the most attractive place in Paris to me; to the instinctive man, that is, whom I have been

trying to experiment with. I will give you a million guesses as to what that most attractive place is."

"As if I had the patience to waste even three," said the doctor. "Tell me."

"A railway station," said I; "the Orleans station on the Quai d'Orsay."

The doctor's face fell, as I was sure it would.

"I am disappointed in you," he said, half playfully. "The inference is all too clear. The man you were had not the good taste to live in Paris, as he undoubtedly might have done. Well, we must follow your elusive self, if it takes us to the world's end. Have you any plan for setting about it?"

"Yes," said I; "it is a very simple one, but I think it ought to work. I shall have to trespass upon an hour of your time to-morrow morning, though."

"An hour!" he said. "But I am going with you."

"No, that will not be necessary," I assured him. "All that I shall need of you is your company to the station and your highly diverting conversation up to the moment when I ask the man inside the window for my ticket. I want to approach that window without a single idea of my journey or my possible destination in my mind. Of course, if my instinctive self fails to come up to the scratch at

the critical moment, we shall have to follow some other and more laborious course, but if the name of some city on the railway line does pop into my mind at the critical moment, I shall be able to explore that place, wherever it may be, quite as well without your help as with it."

He assented enthusiastically to the plan as a whole, but demurred a little to the last part of it.

"I suppose you are right," he admitted grudgingly, "though I should have liked an excuse to run off with you."

"You may get it before I am very many hours away," said I. "If I find I need you, I shall telegraph."

With that proviso, he assented heartily to my plan, and the next morning we put it into operation.

As I had learned from previous experience confidently to expect, my lost inner self responded instantly to the test I had put upon it. I had taken my place in the line before the window, chatting enthusiastically with the doctor about a certain singer who was making her reputation at the Opéra Comique, my mind in a state of perfect blank as to my present surroundings. When I reached the wicket, I confidently shoved thirty francs across the counter to the man inside, and said:

"One first class to Tours."

I had accepted the ticket and the change which he returned to me, and come away from the window, my mind still so fully occupied with the previous subject of our conversation, that I failed to realize how completely the experiment had worked, until the excitement shining in the doctor's face recalled it to me.

There was an express starting almost at once, so I took my leave of the doctor, promising to return soon in any case, and to telegraph for him the moment I felt his presence would be of the slightest assistance to me.

I was conscious during that four hours' ride to Tours of an excitement that mounted higher and higher in my veins as we rushed on through the strangely familiar landscape. At every stop we made, the hoarse voices of the men on the platform, proclaiming the names of the stations, recalled new floods of memories. The picture of the home, which I had crossed the seas to seek, etched itself more vividly and in more minute detail upon my mind.

When I dismounted from the train at Tours, I was so excited that I could hardly hold myself back to accompany the languid pace of the porter to whom I handed my bag.

One sensible consideration did occur to me. I

stopped in the station long enough to deposit the bag in the cloakroom and to take a check for it. Where my explorations were going to take me, I, of course, had no idea, but I felt reasonably sure that I should return to Tours for the night.

I feed my porter, thrust the check for my bag into a pocket, along with my loose change, and hurried out to spring into the nearest cab.

" Rue Nationale," I said to the driver, " and out across the stone bridge. After that, I will tell you."

Paris had been familiar, exceedingly so; but Paris was nothing to this. Over nearly every shop front was a name that went to my heart like the hand clasp of an old friend. The very signs on the tram cars, as they went filing past me on their single track, tooting their absurd little horns, were poignant with association.

By the time we had reached the end of the street and passed between the two seated monumental figures that flanked the approach to the bridge, the tears were streaming down my face, and every nerve in my body was tingling. Ah! I had nearly reached my journey's end now, there could be no doubt of that.

The broad, rambling Loire, with its low, sandy islands rising from its shallows, was behind us. Our meager little horse was climbing laboriously

up the road through the Tranché. Presently we emerged at the crossroads beside the St. Symphorien post-office. With my walking stick I pointed out the road we were to take. I could not command my voice to utterance.

For perhaps a mile we drove on. Then, as we reached the crest of a little hill, I cried out to the driver to stop. With trembling fingers I thrust a twenty-franc piece into his hand.

"Go back," I cried; "I am through with you."

He stared at me as though he thought me mad, for we were upon a country road with no building whatever within, perhaps, a quarter of a mile of us; but the gold piece in his hand was a powerful argument to do my bidding. The little horse wheeled around and clattered away in a cloud of dust and I was left alone; alone, as for a little while, I wished to be.

For, from the little eminence upon which I stood, I saw before my eyes, rising from the fertile little valley, like a solitary jewel in its setting, the chateau of my dreams, the home which, in anything but my dreams, I had hardly dared hope to find.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SPRING

IT was nearly an hour later that I rang the bell at the great gate of the main entrance to the park surrounding the chateau.

In that interval of time, by thinking hard about my French doctor, and what his advice to me on such an occasion would certainly have been, I had calmed myself sufficiently to appear before whoever opened the gate in the character of a casual sight-seer.

I had a wild hope that the assumption of this character might not prove necessary; that the person who opened the gate at my summons would greet me with a welcome home, would cry out, in that instant of recognition, the name I once had borne. I dared not entertain such a hope as that, and it proved well I did not.

The figure I presently saw approaching to unlock the gate was a totally unfamiliar one to me. Furthermore, it became plain the next moment that he had never seen me either. Clearly, all he

saw in me was the omnipresent touring sight-seer, and all that he welcomed about me was the prospect of a liberal tip.

He was a youngish man, very thin, this thinness extending to his dust-colored hair and his weak, patchy beard. He had a rather sinister look, I thought, but attributed it, and perhaps rightly, to his misfortune in being extremely wall-eyed.

I told him that I wished, if I could without trespassing, to have a look at the place.

"But most assuredly, monsieur," he said with enthusiasm.

"My guidebook appears not to mention the chateau," said I, as I entered the gate, "or, if it does, I have overlooked it. May I ask the name of it and to whom it belongs?"

"It is called Chateau la Mesle," said the gate keeper. "It was the property of foreigners. The wife of an American monsieur and her son lived here for many years. But she died and he went away. Since that time the chateau has been closed."

"Americans, you say?" I commented. His answer fitted so exactly into the frame of my hopes, that I craved additional assurance of hearing him repeat it.

"Yes, monsieur," he said.

"And their name?" I asked.

My heart was racing so fast it almost suffocated me, but I dare say the tone of my query sounded casual enough.

"I was not here; I did not come here until after they had gone away," said the lodge keeper. "It was a foreign name and difficult to remember."

"An American lady and her son, you say. What did the name sound like, even if you can't recall it exactly?"

"As I said," he answered, "I was not here, and did not come till after they had gone——"

It may have been the obliquity of his eyes which gave me the impression, but I thought that my interest in the name of these foreigners caused him to glance at me a little suspiciously.

"I am sorry I can't remember," he continued. "Has monsieur any special interest in the matter?"

If by pretending he was about to repeat the name, he had deliberately planned to trap me into an expression of impatience over his failure to do so, the trap worked. His quick glance caught, I was sure, my shrug of irritation. There was nothing for me now but to assume the casual sight-seer again as best I could.

"Not an interest in the world," said I. "I was merely curious as to your reason for making a

secret of what I could learn at any neighboring farmhouse."

I set out briskly up the driveway as I spoke, and he, after what appeared to be a moment of indecision, came hurrying on after me.

"One moment, monsieur," he called; "one moment, and I will be with you."

He disappeared with that into the lodge. Without waiting for him, I strolled slowly up the drive. When I heard him come out, I quickened my pace, expecting him to hurry on at once and overtake me.

He was still two or three yards behind me when I reached a point where a comparatively obscure path left the drive at a sharp angle. The chateau was hidden from view at this point by trees and shrubbery, but without hesitation, and completely without thought, I turned up the narrow path.

It was a complete betrayal of my rôle of casual sight-seer, but I did not realize it at the time. My instinctive self had simply walked me up that path, and when the lodge keeper from the driveway called me back, I stood for a moment bewildered between my two personalities, the old and the new. I even started to ask the question, "Has anything been changed?" so certain was I that my narrow path would lead me right, so clearly had I in mind

the picture of the carved stone doorway at the end of it.

"This way, monsieur, this way," called the lodge keeper insistently.

What served better than anything else to rouse me was my discovery of the fact that he had a small hand camera with him.

"What are you doing with that?" I asked sharply.

"Oh, I make photographs of the grounds to sell to tourists," said the man. "I thought my stroll about the place with you would afford a good opportunity."

Of course he was lying, and I experienced for a moment a hot-tempered man's impulse to kick his precious camera to pieces. I felt morally certain that he had seized the moment of my hesitation there on the path to take a picture of me. The sun had been shining straight in my face at the time, I remembered.

I conquered the impulse, however, and as best I could held down my rising suspicion of the man. It would be rather absurd for me to go through life suspecting every person I saw of being an agent in a dark conspiracy against myself. If I was not mistaken, that sort of idea was characteristic of a well-known form of insanity.

The lodge keeper and I walked on up the main

driveway. Presently we came in sight of the chateau. There, off at a corner to the left, was the doorway to which my path had offered a short cut. I started toward it, but again the lodge keeper stopped me.

"Pardon, monsieur," said he, "it is not permitted to show visitors the house."

I stared at him.

"That was not what you said at the gate," I observed.

"Monsieur misunderstood me," said he. "The grounds are all I am at liberty to show."

He was speaking in the dogged, defiant manner of one who knows the weakness of his position.

"You say the house has been unoccupied a long time?" I asked.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Is there a single living person inside it now?"

The outward appearance of the place was enough to provide an answer. After a moment's hesitation, he decided to tell me the truth.

"No," he admitted.

I plunged my hand in my pocket where I had some gold along with my loose change. It was no time for half measures. I drew out a napoleon.

"For all I can see," said I, "you can still tell

your employer that you have obeyed his rules. I don't know who can contradict you."

As I had withdrawn my hand from my pocket, a bit of paper had fluttered away on the grass. It blew in his direction, and he picked it up, stealing a good look at it before he returned it to me. It proved to be nothing but the check for my bag in the *consigne* at the station, so I thought the insolence of his action hardly worth resenting.

"Come," said I, "am I to see the interior?"

Cupidity was urging him strongly in one direction, but it was evident that fear was operating even more strongly in another. He made a gesture of resignation and finality.

"Monsieur, it is impossible," he said. "But," he continued, as I was about to put my napoleon back into my pocket, "but there is a summer-house here on the lawn that is occasionally shown to visitors. If monsieur cares to see that, I will take the risk of disobeying my instructions."

I looked up once more at the chateau. Every carving in the broad arch which formed the doorway was as familiar to me as if I had seen it but yesterday. This old chateau could represent no mere incident in my past life. It must have been the scene of the greater part of it. When I reflected that the only thing which lay between me and the complete establishment of my identity was

this lodge keeper's stubborn refusal to admit me to this house and to tell me the name of its owner, which I was sure must both have been mine, I was very near taking him by the throat and squeezing the words out of him. I doubt if I could have resisted that impulse had I not felt sure that a very few minutes or hours, at the most, of patient inquiry after I had left the place would tell me all that I wanted to know.

"Well," I assented grudgingly, "show me the summerhouse, then," and I handed him the napoleon.

The building in question was of no great architectural pretensions; built all in one story, and comprising but a single room. It was a charming room, however, blazing with sunshine, and nearly surrounded by windows. It was entirely disfurnished and bare, but even at that, in the very way the shadows from the leaded windowpanes flung themselves across the stone-flagged floor, I seemed to read a sort of welcome home.

On the floor toward one end of the room was a tattered square of matting. I walked away from my guide, who had lingered near the door, and, hardly conscious of what I was doing, slipped the matting away with my foot from the spot of the floor which it covered. The action revealed the fact that one of the flagstones had been replaced

by an accurately fitting wooden cover with a ring in it.

I stooped down and tugged at this ring. The cover came up easily, and beneath it I saw what appeared to be a mirror. I knew what it was, though, without dipping my finger into it—a tiny spring at the bottom of a cup-shaped cavity in a rock. It was not much below the surface of the floor, and within quite easy reach if one knelt down upon the flagging.

I also saw, just where I had expected to see it, a battered pewter mug, dangling from a chain.

The whole of my action had been mechanical and wholly unconscious. The only thing about it that afforded me any surprise was the look of my own face, which I saw mirrored there. That looked a little strange to me.

I was brought sharply back to the present, however, by an exclamation of surprise on the part of my guide. Apparently he had not known that the spring was there. He stared at me for a moment in utter amazement. Then, without saying a word, he whirled about, ran out of the house, slammed the door after him and locked it. For a moment the thought that he meant to keep me a prisoner here alarmed me somewhat, but that feeling passed away presently. It is easy to lock a man out of a house, but hard to lock him into it,

unless it has been especially prepared for such a purpose.

I walked over to a window from which I could command a considerable portion of the driveway. The lodge keeper was still running when I got my first view of him. Then his pace slackened, and presently he stopped. He seemed to be trying to decide between two courses of action. It took him only a moment to make up his mind, however, and the next I saw of him he was walking briskly away down the drive like a man who knows exactly what he is going to do and has no reason to exhaust himself with excessive haste.

I was strongly tempted to remain there in the summerhouse a while longer. Possibly somewhere, even within those four narrow walls, I could find the answer to my secret; but my promise to the doctor occurred to me. I had told him I would not permit myself to be caught in a trap; that I would not underestimate either the audacity or the cleverness of my enemies. Really, my secret was solved already. I knew—I was ready to take my oath—that I was the American young gentleman who had lived in this chateau. His identity I could learn anywhere, and quite without risk. So, rather regretfully, I let myself out of one of the windows and made my way down the drive.

I had nearly reached the gate, though I was quite hidden from the view of it by a turn in the driveway and a heavy growth of shrubbery and timber, when I heard the sound of voices. The first was old, cracked, and obsequious, and I hazard a guess that it belonged to the mother of my friend, the lodge keeper. She seemed to be tugging at the gate and apologizing for her slowness in getting it open. Apparently I was not to be the only visitor at the chateau to-day.

"It is not permitted for the carriage to enter," she was saying, "but monsieur and mademoiselle are most welcome. My son has gone away, but myself—I can show you everything as well as he, though I am old."

And then came a voice that startled me. I had been on the point of walking out into view around the curve, but at the sound of it I stopped short where I was. It was a man's voice—an old voice, too, I thought, and though I did not immediately place it, there was no doubt that it was familiar. He was speaking laboriously in very broken French.

"We are not sight-seers, madam," he said. "We have come to see Mr. Christopher Morton. Will you take him my card? This is his house, is it not?"

CHAPTER XV

WHAT THE BREEZE BROUGHT ME

CHRISTOPHER MORTON! At the sound of the words my mind began racing madly like the propeller of a steamship when some great wave lifts it out of the water.

"Morton, Morton," I whispered to myself. What was my association with that name? The next moment I had it.

Morton-Duggleby! Christopher Morton, the great shipbuilder!

The next moment my mind added something to the phrase; I was saying to myself: "The late Christopher Morton!"

He had been my father and he was dead, and I must be the son who had lived with his mother in France.

As I recall that incident now, I am aware that it was my new self, not my old, who was fitting together the pieces of this puzzle for me, fitting it together out of that magazine article which my French doctor had been so annoyed to learn that I

had read. In other words, I was deliberately thinking who I must be, instead of listening for the chime of unconscious recognition from my inner self.

That may seem a rather fine-spun distinction, but it was an important one to me. Then came a time during the next few hours when I lamented the fact that my mind had offered me no fresh white page for the recording of the impressions of that moment, but one instead that was written all over with a strong prejudice.

At the moment when I walked out around the curve of the drive and into view of the persons standing at the gate, at that moment I believed my mystery to be fully solved.

The next moment my ingeniously constructed edifice of inference and deduction came tumbling about my ears. The two new visitors to the chateau, who had come, not to see it but to interview its owner, Christopher Morton, these two visitors were Virginia Heatherfield and her father.

At first they did not see me. They were listening, evidently with the keenest disappointment, to the old woman's voluble denials that Christopher Morton lived here. He had not been here since his mother's death, a year—two years ago; the chateau was closed—vacant. If they did not believe her, they could go and see for themselves.

I doubt if they understood her words, but the purport of her speech was plain enough. As they listened to it, the look of disappointment in their faces was plain to see. Presently, perceiving this look in her father's face, seeing how pale he was and how his hands were trembling, Virginia forced a smile to her lips.

"It is only what we might have expected, father," she said, "and it is really our first attempt. We shall find him yet."

Then, with faltering, stammering words, she tried to ask the old woman if she could not afford them some sort of clew, however indirect, to Mr. Morton's whereabouts.

Meanwhile, there stood I, not a dozen paces away, I who had felt absolutely certain a moment before that I was Christopher Morton himself!

At the sight of them, of course, my confidence that I had solved the secret of my identity received a staggering blow. They had seen me on shipboard and had identified me, either rightly or wrongly, with a man who must have played an important part in their lives, a man they must have known well. Whether they were right or wrong, their presence here at the chateau, their errand, and their obvious disappointment in its failure made it pretty clear that the man they had identified me with was not Christopher Morton.

Whoever I might be, it was evident that I was not the very man they had come across the sea to find.

I do not pretend that in the moment while I stood there, unremarked either by the old French woman or by the Heatherfields, I was capable of any such close reasoning as that. All I was conscious of was a vague disquiet in place of the elated certainty of the moment before.

The next moment the sound of my approaching steps caught the girl's ear. She turned and looked at me. Astonishment at first was all there was in her face, almost the look of one who sees a ghost, but that expression was quickly succeeded by one of incredulous dread, dread mingled with hot, scornful anger. Her eyes blazed as she looked at me.

"You!" she said.

The word was hardly voiced at all; hardly more than a whisper, but its thrilling intensity made it cut like a whiplash.

"You!" she repeated, "*here*?"

Before I could have said a word, even if I had had a word to say, her attention was sharply diverted from me back to her father. He, I am sure, had not seen me at all, but the heat of the day, combined with his disappointment over the utter fruitlessness of his visit to the chateau, was too

much for him. He had been reeling when she spoke to me, and now, in spite of the clasp of the strong arms which she flung about him, he sank down to the ground, in the roadway at her feet, in a dead faint.

She was down beside him in an instant, pillowing his head on her arm, while with her free hand she tried to loosen the knot of his cravat and unbutton his collar.

"Bring some water quickly," she commanded the old woman.

Her manner was calm, collected enough, but what few words of French she may have possessed failed her in the emergency, and she spoke in English.

The old woman was quite beside herself with excitement.

"Fetch some cold water quickly," I commanded in a language she understood; and I called after her as she disappeared into the house, "and bring some cognac, too."

Then I stripped off my coat. "Lay his head back on this," I told Virginia as I placed it beside her. "He should lie flat."

She obeyed me mechanically, but when a moment later I offered to help her with the stiff buttonholes of the old gentleman's collar, she spoke so fiercely that I started back.

"Don't touch him," she said. "Not with those hands of yours!"

I turned away rather giddily, reeling a little as one might who had received a knife thrust. Whatever there had been in her eyes when I had last confronted her on shipboard, of doubt, of wonder, of a half-dared hope, that was all gone now. My presence here in the grounds of Christopher Morton's chateau seemed to settle in her mind all doubt as to my identity and all question as to my guilt.

I turned away, as I say, and in spite of my effort to steady myself, to check the whirl of my thoughts, they propounded a question to me which shook me to the very bottom of my soul. "What if the girl is right; what if this lost man for whom you are seeking is, indeed, the knave, the coward, the traitor that her father declared him?"—"Not with those hands of yours!"

For the sake of doing something I went to the lodge door to urge additional haste from the old woman. She came almost at once, and within a minute or two the restoratives she brought proved efficacious. The old gentleman opened his eyes, and the next moment, with his daughter's assistance, rose slowly to his feet. With dignified courtesy, though his expression of it was somewhat stammering, he declined the old woman's invitation to go into the house and rest.

"It was a mere momentary weakness," he said. "I should not have remained standing so long in the sun. The little drive, such as I have before me, will restore me completely. I thank you," he concluded, with a stately bow, "both for your assistance and for your hospitality."

Then, as he turned away from her, his eyes rested upon me where I stood, coatless and highly uncomfortable in the background. I fully expected, and dreaded equally, to see the same amazed expression in his face which had appeared in Virginia's, but to my great surprise and relief he appeared not to recognize me.

He noted that I was without my coat, however, and a glance at it lying in the driveway showed him the use to which it had been put.

"And I thank you, sir, also," he continued.

Relying on his failure to recognize me, I stepped forward and offered him my assistance into his carriage. It was the only decent thing I could have done, though I rather dreaded its possible effect on Virginia. But when I had got him safely seated and had turned away, with a bow which matched his own, it was only to find her confronting me, my dusty coat in her hands.

The look in her eyes, the look of tragic despair which underlay her anxiety over this most recent

episode, went straight to my heart. I felt I could not let her go like that.

"Miss Heatherfield," said I, "may I have just a word, just a moment? It is for your sake and for his that I ask it. I would not thrust my own needs upon you at a moment like this."

The mere sound of my voice seemed to agitate her almost uncontrollably, but mastering herself with obvious effort, she nodded assent, and drew a pace or two away from the carriage. Making a pretense at brushing some of the dust from my coat, before she handed it back to me, served as the opportunity for what I wanted to say.

"For some reason," said I— "and I give you my word I can form no guess what it is—for some reason my presence here convinces you that I am indeed the man your father thought I was on shipboard. Who that man can be I do not know, and I have no dearer wish than to find out."

Her eyes widened with clear astonishment.

"If you do not know, then you are not the man, monsieur. But if you are not the man, then—then why did you come here? How did you know that we were coming here?"

"That I did not know. I am still only halfway out of the daze of astonishment which the sight of you and your father here in the driveway caused me." I paused there a moment, then went on:

"As to the reason why I came, that is a part of a story which I want to tell you some day. I have a belief that you, of all people in the world, may be able to help me."

She pressed her hands to her face with a gesture of agonized bewilderment. "I can't understand. My whole world seems—seems to be whirling around."

"I know," I answered. "I understand your sensation, perhaps, as well at this moment as anyone who ever lived. For these many weeks I have been trying to hold fast to courage and keep going forward in the dark. I have seen many a false dawn, and I am still waiting for the day to break. Yet I believe that it will break at last—my day and—and yours, too."

My words, and I think still more the mere sound of my voice, kindled in her eyes that same wild, incredible surmise which I had seen there once before. She was looking at me with an intensity which threatened to annihilate the iron control I had put upon myself. I could not tell my story now, as we stood here in the road, with an impatient horse and a still more impatient cabman waiting to take her and her father away from me. No, my story must wait. But her eyes were still on mine, and their gaze seemed to search the very bottom of my soul.

"Who are you?'" she asked, her voice trembling with uncontrollable excitement. "You must tell me who you are!"

"Oh—" I answered, with what was almost a sob, "that I do not know!" Then, with a deep-drawn breath I mastered myself again.

"Whoever I may be," said I, "as I stand here before you, I have no thought but to be of service to you. My needs and my questions can wait. But your father is weak, and I fear he is ill. He needs, for the next few hours at least, a better protection than you alone can afford him. I want you to take me into your service. Are you planning to go back to Paris to-night?"

"Yes," she said, "I suppose that is all we can do now."

"Then let me go with you," I pleaded. "I may be of more service than you think. Can't you simply trust me," I continued, "and let the explanation wait? Heart and soul I offer you my service. Can't you accept it?"

There came a rush of tears into her eyes, and she held out her hand.

"Whoever you may be," she said, "yes, I accept it." Then, "Will it be safe for us to try it?" she questioned. And the linking of our two identities in one pronoun brought my heart into my throat. "Won't my father recognize you?"

" He has not so far," said I. " I don't think he will. At any rate, I can't let you go off alone."

" Come then," she said, and took her seat in the carriage beside him.

I climbed on the box with the driver. Her father manifested no alarm whatever over this proceeding. He seemed to take the fact of my having joined the party as a matter of course.

As for me, I was glad that my isolated seat gave me the opportunity for a little calm reflection, or as good an imitation of it as the excitement and suspense of my situation would permit.

I stole an inquiring glance now and then at Virginia to learn how the ride was affecting her father. Three or four times I did this and received from her each time a reassuring signal that all was well with him.

I had begun to doubt a little the real necessity of my presence in the party, when she leaned forward and spoke so low that the sound barely reached my ear.

I motioned to the cabman to stop his horse, dismounted, and came around beside her. We were then within only a short distance of the post and telegraph office at St. Symphorien. Her father seemed to have fallen into a sort of a doze, from which the stopping of the vehicle did not rouse him.

"It is not the least like him to fall asleep like that in the middle of the afternoon," she said. "Do you think he is seriously ill or going to be?"

"I am not a physician," said I, "and I don't know. It may be just the natural reaction from the stimulants we gave him to revive him after his faint."

She seemed only half reassured, and I myself was in some perplexity as to what we ought to do. The sight of the telegraph office suggested something to me.

"As I said, I am not a physician," I continued, when this thought struck me, "but one of the greatest physicians in France is my friend and benefactor. If I telegraph to him he will come at once. There must be a hotel in Tours where we can stay comfortably until he arrives. Of course, if your father should need medical assistance in the mean time we can get it, but I should prefer losing no time dispatching that telegram. The office is right here," I continued, nodding toward the little building; "if you will excuse me a moment, I will go in there and send off the wire."

She nodded assent.

"I am very glad you have come with us," she said.

The entrance to the post-office was around at the other side of the building. Taking the short-

est line to it, I skirted the side wall closely. As I passed under the open window, I heard an exclamation from within that made me shrink up close to the wall and stand dead still. The voice that uttered that exclamation was the voice of the lodge keeper. Evidently he had run away and left me for the purpose of sending a telegram and, having had to go afoot, had reached his destination only a few minutes ahead of us.

The cause of his exclamation was revealed almost simultaneously with the sound of it. A piece of white paper, propelled by the lusty summer breeze, came blowing out of the window. In a flash I recovered it and shrank back close against the wall. I heard footsteps approaching the window, and imagined that he was looking out to see where his telegram had gone. Finding no trace of it, he returned to the writing desk, presumably to compose another.

Meanwhile, I, my nerves tingling with excitement, was reading the message he was about to send.

CHAPTER XVI

THE PARIS *HERALD*

Il est venu aujourd'hui. C'est lui, j'en suis sûr. J'en ai fait un cliché sans sa connaissance. Sa valise est au consigne à Tours. Je vais le suivre. Aussi j'ai rencontré en chemin une Américaine avec un vieillard, son père. Ces sont, peut-être, les autres.

PIERRE BOTTIN.

THIS is what I read after I had shrunk back against the wall and smoothed out the crumpled paper which the breeze and a stroke of good fortune had brought me.

For just a moment after I had finished, I stood where I was, thinking as fast as I have ever thought in my life. The message was badly written, with many blots and erasures, and it would evidently take the author of it some little time to compose another.

I slipped around the corner of the building, and assured myself that neither the carriage nor my path to it was commanded by any window.

At the sight of me, Virginia's eyes widened, and

I knew that some hint of the strange tale I had to tell must be written in my face.

"What has happened?" she asked, a little breathlessly, as I came up beside her.

"Let me ask you three questions first," said I, "and then I will tell you. On your way out to the chateau, to Mr. Morton's chateau, did you meet a man in the road walking as if he were in a hurry?"

"A rather evil-looking young man? A man with queer eyes?" she asked, and I nodded.

"Yes," she said, "and he stared hard at us. He turned around to look after we had passed him."

"Another question. Did you come from Paris this morning, and if you did, where did you leave your luggage?"

"At the railway station," she said.

"Now my last question," said I, "and that's the important one. Unless you trust me fully you must not answer it."

"I trust you," she said quickly. "I told you that."

"Well, then," said I, speaking as fast as I could, "have you any enemies? Is there anyone who might anticipate this attempt of yours to see Christopher Morton; who might, perhaps, wish to prevent your meeting him?"

She did not pale at my question, as I half expected she would. Instead, the color ran high in her cheeks.

"Yes," she said, "there is."

Without another word, I held my telegram before her eyes, and, at the risk of doing something superfluous, translated:

He came to-day. It is he, I am sure of it. I made a photograph of him without his knowing it. His valise is in the cloakroom at Tours. I am going to follow him. Also I met on the road an American girl with an old man, her father. Perhaps they are the others.

"Now," said I, "I am the person to whom the first part of the message refers. The man who wrote it is in that building there composing another to take its place. This blew out of the window and I caught it. He will go to the Tours station and wait for me there. He means to follow me, but if he sees you, he will undoubtedly have you followed also."

She frowned in some perplexity, and glanced from me to her father.

"I don't know what we are going to do, monsieur," she said. "Do you?"

"You leave it in my hands?" I asked eagerly.

For an instant a troubled look of doubt clouded her eyes, but if the doubt were there, she con-

quered it resolutely. She indicated her father with a grave inclination of the head.

"I put him in your hands, monsieur," she said. "I will do whatever you say."

I turned to the driver.

"Wheel around," I commanded, "and drive us to Mettray."

He growled a little at that—a city cabman never relishes excursions into the country—and said something about the color of my money.

"You shall be paid," said I, "paid so well that you will forget you have ever been to Mettray."

That little hint of mystery went straight to his heart. He grinned in perfect comprehension.

"*Allons,* monsieur," said he.

I was no longer seated on the box, but on the cramped little extra seat, facing the one occupied by Virginia and her father. His condition did not seem to be growing any more serious, and, indeed, several times during the course of our drive he roused himself sufficiently to take part in our conversation; but even during those moments of comparative brightness he did not seem disturbed or even puzzled by my presence in the carriage.

As Virginia's alarm about his condition lessened, I noticed her casting an occasional anxious glance down the road behind us.

"There is nothing to be apprehended from that

quarter," said I. "We were safe from our wall-eyed friend, the lodge keeper, the moment we got around the first bend of the road. He has reflected that I would certainly go to the Tours station to recover my hand bag, and has hurried down there as fast as his legs will carry him, to wait for me. It will be hours before he even suspects that he has gone off on a false scent, and when he does, he will never think of Mettray. There is probably a very decent little inn there where we can make your father quite comfortable, and as soon as that is attended to, I will telegraph my doctor to come down from Paris in his automobile."

She glanced at her father, who was dozing beside her.

"Do you think that will be necessary?" she asked anxiously.

"For his medical services, very likely not," said I, "but if you are really the 'others' of whom Monsieur Pierre Bottin speaks in his telegram, why, that same doctor is likely to prove of more service to you than any other man in the world."

"Do you think he will relish having so heavy a demand made upon him?"

"He will be coming for me quite as much as for you," said I, "for I feel the need of his wisdom and his intelligence as much as I ever felt it

before, which is saying more than you can possibly realize."

Her father roused from his doze just then, and put an end to our conversation, and from that moment until we got into Mettray we talked about the gold-green valleys, the lines of slender poplars, their tops, golden in the light of the declining sun, the streams and pools and the great black-belted cattle, the lovely landscape of the Touraine that passed before our eyes as we drove on.

Before I dismissed our driver at the door of the little inn, I paid him with a liberality which I thought would insure his silence regarding us, in the unlikely case that he was questioned, and which also wakened the warm interest of the *concierge* who had come out from his cubby-hole to assist us to alight. It counteracted fully, in his mind, the drawback of our having arrived without luggage.

I promptly called for the proprietor of the establishment, and when he appeared, demanded the best rooms he had, explaining that the elderly monsieur was too weak and ill to be taken back to Tours to-night.

Whatever discrepancies the story may have presented in his mind, the authority of my manner and the twenty-franc piece I gave him were sufficient to blind him to them.

He set about getting things ready with tremendous good will, shouting directions to servants all over the inn, and presently he assured us that our rooms were ready for us.

As for dinner, we could either partake of the excellent repast which was already in preparation for the other guests at the inn, or, if we desired, he would prepare us, with his own hands, a quite particular meal which should be served to us privately. All that he needed was a little time for preparation. I clinched my position in his good graces by electing the latter alternative.

It required the combined efforts of the landlord and myself to get Mr. Heatherfield up the steep stairs to his chamber, for he was almost a dead weight, and no inconsiderable one at that. Once there, however, and fortified by a little cognac and milk, he rallied somewhat, and we were able to leave him to Virginia's ministrations.

The moment I was relieved I went to the telegraph office and sent off my message to the doctor. I asked him to come at once and suggested that he travel in his automobile.

"They have left you and come to me," I said, feeling sure he would understand this as a reference to Virginia and her father, "and all three of us have been obliged to come here to escape the delegated attentions of the young man whom we

last saw on the White Star Pier. So the sooner the better, if you don't mind taking to the road to-night."

That done, I visited two or three shops and purchased such toilet articles as would enable us all to pass the night in comparative comfort without our luggage. Then, followed by a small boy with his arms full of my purchases, I returned to the hotel.

The landlord met me with the intelligence that the young American lady wished me to come up to her father's room as soon as I had returned.

I hurried thither in some alarm, but Virginia's face reassured me.

"He is asleep," she said quickly, "and he seems to be perfectly comfortable. When he wakens, I shall have some good news for him."

"Good news?" I repeated somewhat surprised. "What news can have reached you here?"

"It was by a strange chance," she said. "That newspaper was lying on the center table. The maid who had cleared up the room was starting to carry it away with her, when I noticed that it was printed in English, and told her to leave it. I thought it would keep me company while I was waiting for you to come back."

I took it up and examined it. It was the Paris *New York Herald,* with yesterday's date line.

"I read it. . . . My house of cards was demolished indeed."

She pointed out a single paragraph in one of its interminable chronicles of the movements of society.

"You may read it," she said; "but, oh, you cannot imagine what it will mean to us if it is true!"

I read it, and then for a moment I turned my face away from her. My house of cards was demolished, indeed. It read:

Mr. Christopher Morton, who has been living in retirement since the death of his mother, nearly three years ago, has revisited Paris, and is stopping at the Ritz Hotel. Mr. Morton inherits, under the terms of his father's will, the immense estate of the late Christopher Morton of New York.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SPY

OF course the words that paragraph contained completed the wreck of the theory which I had held so strongly for just one moment this afternoon—that I was Christopher Morton. But the presence, here alone with me, standing close beside me, of the woman of my dreams, her readiness to help me and to accept my help was too poignant to allow me to waste any regret over the mere theory.

I found her looking at me when I laid down the paper. Her eyes followed the hand that held it as it moved toward the table, and then, returning, clasped the other hand.

She caught her breath then, as if even in that trivial gesture she had read a significance. "The same hands," I heard her whisper. "The same—" and then she checked herself.

"You said back there at La Mesle," she went on, "when we were standing by the roadside, that you wanted me to hear your story; that you

thought I could help you—I, of all people in the world. And now—now we're alone, and I'm waiting to hear it. You said you did not know who you were."

I shook my head; my throat was dry and my lips were trembling.

"You mean," she asked unsteadily, "that the memory is gone—the memory of all the past?"

I made a sign of assent. I was capable of no other answer.

"And yet," she said, "you told me that I—I, of all people in the world, might help you. And that day on shipboard you spoke to my father, you told him that you had a most earnest wish— How could you have that wish if you had forgotten?"

I think I might have made a beginning at an answer but for that last reference of hers, for underlying the doubt and fear which spoke in her unsteady voice and cried out from her eyes, there was hope, and, though I dared not call it that, a great love. But her reference to her father and to my short and altogether disastrous interview with him that day on deck, recalled the paralyzing dread which had first assailed me on that occasion, and which I had struggled with only this afternoon; the dread lest the lost man I sought might prove to be, in truth, the knave and the traitor her

father believed him to be. It was not plain cowardice, no fear of present consequences to myself, but a fear that shook the very foundations of my being, that threatened my actual possession of an identity and hinted a denial of my right to the use of a first-person pronoun. There was nothing but stark madness at the end of that train of thought.

"I thought I could tell you my story," said I at the end of a little silence, "but I find I can't. It must be told to you in a more detached way than I could possibly tell it. It must be told you by some one whose disinterestedness, yes, and whose perfect sanity you cannot possibly doubt."

Her eyes widened at that, and I saw the look come into them that I dreaded to see.

"I'm not mad," I went on; "at least the great doctor who is helping me through this tangle of mysteries says that I am not. He is on the way here now. When he comes, he can tell you my story."

"I wish he were here," she said.

"He'll not be long," I assured her. "He's coming now as fast as an automobile can travel. And, in the mean time, can't we shut out the past altogether? Can't we pretend, for this hour or two, that the man you knew is dead and that I am

some other man? Even at that, our present fates are woven together. We have the same enemies and we have the same friends. Whatever I may have been, the man I am now has only lived a month. I know him and I can vouch for him. He wants to serve you. He wants your—friendship. And that, he understands quite well, is all he has the right to ask. You can trust him."

"I have already trusted him," she answered, "and given him my—friendship. And I accept his terms."

I ordered our dinner served in the room adjoining the one where her father lay asleep. The door was left open so that we could hear if he so much as stirred, and, to avoid disturbing him, we talked almost in whispers and took elaborate precautions against making any noise.

The circumstances made it curiously easy to carry out our compact. Sitting down thus with her at dinner, we two alone, made natural and accountable the haunting, poignant feeling of intimate familiarity I had, a feeling which without such excuse would have been acutely distressing. As it was, the homelike coziness relaxed the tension on nerves and emotions. We chatted together like children.

The meal itself, a work of art quite peculiar to the Touraine, was all that the landlord had prom-

ised it would be, and it provided her with a fresh surprise for every course.

" I am not always such a child as this over the things that are given me to eat," she said at last. " I suppose it is the whispering that makes me feel like a little girl in school again."

" Be glad of the chance," said I. " Both of us, I imagine, have earned a good many compensations along this line. So far as I can remember, I have never been so happy before, so thoroughly, boyishly happy."

" ' Never ' is a pretty big word," she objected.

I did not remind her that " never " in my case covered a period of a little less than a month, but the look I caught in her eyes told me that she had thought of it.

" Would you mind telling me a little of your own story," I asked, " while we're waiting for the French doctor to come? Tell me why you may be ' the others ' in that message I intercepted, and in which I am the one. I don't mean to ask for more than you want to tell me, for more than you feel like telling a man whom you know so little."

She colored. " I don't think I deserve that implication," she said. " I showed this afternoon how completely I trusted you. I put myself and, what means a good deal more to me, my father, entirely into your hands without waiting for any

explanation at all. I knew you were telling me the truth when you said you wished to be of service to us, and I don't question that knowledge now. As for my story, or, rather, my father's, for it is not mine, if you wish, you may hear the whole of it."

"Tell it, please," said I.

"Father—" she began. She had not been looking at me for the past moment or two. Now as she spoke, she glanced up into my eyes and her sentence broke off short. "It—it seems so strange to begin telling this to—you," she said. "You *don't* know—none of the story at all?"

"Not one word. I got your father's name out of the passenger list. I knew yours. I dreamed it."

She looked away with an effort, drew a long breath to steady herself, then began again:

"Father is an inventor; not the sort of an inventor who lives in a garret and thinks that he is about to discover perpetual motion. He is a real inventor, a man who discovers things. The things he discovers are really valuable, and men pay a lot of money for the right to use them. Ten years ago we were what anyone but a millionaire would call rich.

"It was about that time that he found himself on the track of the greatest discovery of all, some-

thing about the chemistry of steel. He had found a way to make it a good deal stronger, a great deal tougher. Of course that meant that you would not have to use near so much of it to get the same results. You could make armor for battleships out of quite thin plates of it."

I am afraid I must confess that only about half my mind was on her words. Not because I was not interested; there was no estimating what the story she had begun to tell might mean to me. But the mere presence of her there, the wonder of her, the magic of the mere sound of the words she used cast a sort of spell over me.

She was leaning forward, her elbows on the table, her clasped hands lying upon it, within reach, such tantalizingly easy reach, of my own. I thrust back my chair and, walking over to the window, stood staring at my own reflection in the black pane. For the feeling had suddenly swept over me that those hands of hers were groping, unconsciously, for mine.

"Oh, I wish he could tell it to you," she said, with a little gesture of impatience. "I can't make it sound interesting. I am too ignorant to talk about it."

"That was not why I walked away," said I. "Go on. You may be sure that I am listening."

"Well," she said, "he found the thing he was

looking for, found that it would do all he had hoped from it, and even more. It would revolutionize, he used to say, the whole science of engineering. But it applied most particularly, he thought, and other people agreed with him, to the building of ships. Of course a revolutionary discovery like that wants a lot of proving out, so he went to Cleveport, where the great shipyards are, and built a special laboratory. He had known Mr. Morton—the old Mr. Morton, that is—for a great many years, so it was to the Morton-Duggleby Company he went with the news of his discovery. But Mr. Morton had retired from his active connection with the business then, and the men father talked to about it were Mr. Duggleby and his son. They were greatly interested, of course, for father's word in a matter of that sort carried a great deal of weight. Still, they professed themselves to be very cautious, wanting new tests, and tests on a larger scale all the time. And at last father got to thinking they were not acting in perfectly good faith."

I laughed shortly, and Virginia cast a quick, puzzled glance at me.

"You *do* know them?"

"To my cost," said I, "but my acquaintance is confined to the past month. Go on; I don't mean to interrupt you."

"I suppose it is partly my fault," said she, "that father didn't come to that conclusion sooner. He is a very unsuspicious man, almost childlike in such ways, and it is always hard for him to believe that other people are not as candid as he. That is where I failed him. I knew very little about what he was doing. He seemed such a great man, and such a successful one, that it never occurred to me that he could need me. And then—well, I was pretty well taken up with other things. I thought I was being very philanthropic and charitable, and all that, working among the poor people at Cleveport, teaching in night schools, and so on——"

I did not hear how she finished the sentence. The words "night schools" had fascinated me. It brought a picture flashing into my mind of a shabby room—a disused store it must have been, judging by the show window which I remembered at the front of it. I felt pretty sure, somehow, that I had taught there, too. I resolutely banished the picture from my mind, however, and concentrated on what she was saying.

"So, though I had met both the Dugglebys and distrusted them exceedingly, yet I never warned my father to be on his guard. They already knew all the preliminary processes of his discovery, and all that he had held back from them

was the one substance—a reagent I think is the word for it—that was essential to make it complete. It was not until he had gone so far that he became convinced that they did not mean to pay him for his discovery if they could help it. They meant to steal his secret if they could.

"By that time, though I didn't know it until the crash came, we were almost as poor as the kind of inventor I told you my father was not. The tests on which the Dugglebys had insisted had been immensely expensive, and father had put about everything he had into them. Of course he could have turned to something else, but the end always seemed so near and the whole matter was so immensely important that he never thought of anything else."

"You say they tried to steal his secret," said I, and now my own voice was trembling with excitement. "I should think that would have been a pretty difficult thing to do. How did they set about it?"

At my question, she turned in her chair and sat looking at me with a strange intensity.

"There was a man," she said, "a young man who had been working with me among the poor people in Cleveport—a young man whom my father trusted implicitly and admired very highly. He did not tell him his secret, merely because he

told it to no one, not even to me. But if he had told it at all, he would have confided it to that man with as little hesitation as he would have felt in confiding it to me.

"One night my father's laboratory was looted. His safe was broken and everything in the place systematically searched. An attempt was made to give the work the appearance of an ordinary burglary, but it was such an attempt as could not deceive a child, could not even deceive as unsuspicious a man as my father; and the very next day, the man I told you about, the man who had been almost like a—like a—a son to him, disappeared.

"We have never heard from him since. My father believed, and still believes, that that man was the hired spy of the Dugglebys; that he came to our home with no other purpose than to steal his secret from him."

I knew what the answer must be to the question that was on my lips, but I could not hold back from asking it.

"Is that the man," I asked, "the man your father called a coward and a knave, the man whom you thought dead, is—that the man of whom my voice and face remind you? If I have lived in your life at all, is that the place I have in it?"

It was only with a painful effort that she answered me.

"Yes."

I did not speak. There was nothing I could trust myself to say. But I looked up and I saw in her face a look of pain, yes, and of terror, the pain and terror that were in my own soul.

"Can't you tell me?" she asked a little wildly. "You know *something* about yourself. It's too unbearable to try to wait."

The sight of her suffering brought back my own self-command.

"No," I said quietly, "my story is too incredible. I have moments—I have been going through one now—of doubting myself. But the man who is on his way to us, and he will soon be here, will have no doubts. He will tell the truth, and he will tell everything I know."

She drew a long, tremulous breath in mute acquiescence.

"Come," said I, "your father is asleep; the square out yonder is deserted. Let us go out and walk a little and have a pair of quiet minds ready for the doctor when he comes. Our situation demands all our wits, and he will demand them, too."

She hesitated only a minute, and then assented.

It was a wonderful moonlit night of early summer, and under the charitable mantle which the luminous darkness had thrown over it, the little

town was a thing of entrancing beauty. It would look shabby and ordinary enough to-morrow morning, perhaps, but for the hour it was transfigured.

The moonlight laid a spell upon us, too, I think. After the stress of that long day there was a quieting virtue in its still, silver-like serenity. Just now, at least, it offered a respite from doubt and questioning and mysteries.

For a while, half an hour, perhaps, we walked slowly back and forth along the stretch of broad flagstones which lay before the inn, and in all that time we did not speak, together, a dozen words. But at last she slipped her hand through my arm.

"You are being very good to me, my friend," she said.

My slow step faltered and I caught my breath.

"What is it?" she asked.

"The girl of my dreams did that once."

"The girl of your dreams!" she repeated in a whisper. And then we walked on again together, and again in silence. But her arm stayed in mine.

Presently we heard through the sleepy, soundless air the purring throb of a motor. A pair of white headlights soon were flashing among the shadows of the crooked little street.

"We can complete our story now," said I. "My doctor has arrived from Paris."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MYSTERIOUS PATIENT

WE were standing at the curb as the doctor's automobile drew up. I presented him to Virginia, and then started to lead the way up the stairs to our apartments, but the doctor stopped me.

"I am an old man and I don't like to wait," he said. "Tell me how you have fared to-day. If there were light enough to see your face, I should not have had to ask."

"You would see nothing in my face but perplexity, tenfold deeper than ever," said I. "And to make it worse, there was a moment this afternoon when I really thought I knew who I was."

He made no reply whatever, except with a gesture that told me to lead the way to our apartments. But every line of his body showed me how profound his disappointment was. On the way upstairs we mentioned Mr. Heatherfield's illness, and the first thing the doctor did was to go alone to the invalid's bedside. He was not

gone a moment. On his return he spoke first to Virginia.

"You need feel no alarm on your father's account," he said to her. "He is at this moment taking the only medicine he needs, which is quiet sleep. And that is well," he went on, including both of us in his glance, "because, unless I am mistaken, we others, for the next few hours, shall find plenty to occupy our minds, and possibly our hands, too."

He stood silent for a moment and directed a long look into each of our faces. Virginia's was rather pale and her eyes burned unnaturally bright. A keen observer like the doctor could hardly have failed to note that she was laboring under a stress of anxiety and doubt as great as my own.

The first thing he did after slipping off the light dust coat which he had worn in the motor was to go to the table and pour out three glasses of wine. He nodded to me to help myself, offered the second glass to Virginia, which, after a moment of hesitation, she accepted, and carried the third with him to a chair in a corner of the room.

"Now," said he, "let us all sit down and be as comfortable as we can. Each of you has encountered disappointments and perplexities to-day, and I myself have found a puzzle, the correctness of whose solution I begin to doubt. But with a lit-

tle patience, a part of our mystery may be cleared away in a very few minutes."

It was not an easy thing that he asked of us, but the calm confidence of his manner won the day. When we were all seated, the doctor took a sip of his wine, and asked me for the story of my day's adventures.

"Before I do that," said I, "I want you to tell Miss Heatherfield what you and I know about myself up to this point. I have told her nothing, except the obvious fact that I do not know who I am. I preferred she should hear the story, in detail, from your lips, rather than from mine."

"The story, in detail, will have to wait," said the doctor. "The events which seem to be scheduled for the next few hours will hardly leave us leisure for unnecessary reminiscences; but enough of the broad outline of it to make your to-day's adventures and hopes and disappointments intelligible can be told in a very few minutes."

The doctor emptied his glass and set it down on the table. "A month ago," said he, "this young man found himself, after a period of total unconsciousness, in possession of a perfectly normal mind, if I may term it so, and a totally obliterated memory. He knew neither who he was nor where he was. He discovered, by extraordinary shrewdness of deduction, that he was in an asylum, and

that his enemies meant to keep him there. With extraordinary shrewdness, and almost incredible courage, he escaped from the asylum and, for the moment, from the clutches of his enemies. With sanity and fortitude he took up the task of piecing together, from such fragmentary memories as came to him, the identity of his lost self.

"That problem is still almost as complete a mystery to him as it was a month ago. He knows the name of two of his enemies; that name is Duggleby. He recognized your face and that of your father, and placed them among the number of his friends. He knows himself to have been a man of education and breeding and wide experience with the world. Beyond that, except for what he may have learned to-day, he knows nothing.

"He set out this morning from Paris in search of the chateau that has been in his dreams ever since he can remember. When I got his telegram this afternoon saying that he had found you and had learned that his enemies were your enemies also, I entertained a high hope that he had solved his problem. And I still feel that when we have pieced together all the data we possess—we three here in this room—we shall find ourselves out of the labyrinth and in the straight road at least, though perhaps not at the end of our journey. I

do not ask if you are willing to help. I can see by your face that you are."

It was with a little difficulty that she answered with the single word "Yes."

"In the first place," questioned the doctor, "is it an impertinence to ask what was the nature of your errand here in the Touraine that brought you under the displeasure of young Duggleby?"

"My father had had some business dealings with the Dugglebys," she said, "and had suffered as a result of their bad faith. We came here to make an appeal to the only man who could effect anything in our behalf—young Mr. Christopher Morton."

The doctor started a little and his eyes caught mine. There was a moment's silence.

"You did not find him?" he asked.

"No," she said, "but I know now where he is, or think I do. According to the Paris *Herald,* he is in that city."

The doctor rose from his chair, frowning in deep perplexity, and began pacing the floor. Finally he stopped before her. "Are you quite sure, Miss Heatherfield," he asked very slowly—"quite sure that Mr. Christopher Morton is not, at this moment, in this very room?"

She started and cast a half-frightened glance into the shadows at the farther end of the room,

as if half expecting to see some lurking presence there. Then her gaze traveled to the doctor, on to me and back to the doctor again.

"No," she said in a whisper, "he is not here."

The doctor began his slow patrol of the room again. Virginia turned to me: "Was that what you thought?" she asked. "Did you believe that Christopher Morton was the man you had lost?"

The doctor answered for me. "I was satisfied of it," he said. "I thought so from the first. When he bought his ticket for Tours this morning, I thought that settled it, for I knew that Morton had a chateau in that vicinity."

"It went even nearer than that," said I. "I drove out of the city, guided by an unmistakable instinct; I saw my chateau, the home of my dreams, perfect in every little detail."

In his excitement the doctor addressed Virginia in French.

"You are quite sure," I asked, translating for him, "quite sure that I am not Christopher Morton? Have you ever seen him?"

"No," she said, "I have never seen him; but if you are the man I remember—" she paused and choked a little over the words—"that man could not have been Christopher Morton, monsieur," she said.

"Well," said the doctor, running his hands through his hair, "I suppose we must give it up. Our theory has endured two blows to-day. One from you, mademoiselle, who believe him to be another man, and the other from a man who apparently believes himself to be Christopher Morton. In my blind prejudice in favor of my theory, I set that gentleman down for an impostor, and the coincidence of his coming to see me at that time strengthened my confidence rather than weakened it. He was in my office when your telegram came.

"That, however, is the beginning of a longer story than I propose to elaborate on now. I have been spending what, for a quiet, elderly person like myself, will pass for an adventuresome day. But time presses a little, and I have an idea that your experiences will be more to the point than mine."

As briefly as I could frame the words I told him, then, of my visit to the chateau grounds, my encounter with the wall-eyed lodge keeper, and the meeting with Virginia and her father at the gate; and gave him, in bald outline, Virginia's story of the events which led up to their coming to Europe to seek an interview with young Mr. Morton. Then, in conclusion, I spread before him the intercepted telegram which had diverted

us to Mettray. The doctor's eyes sparkled as he read it, with the same look which I had seen in them when we had walked together out of Mike Lynch's saloon, a look which portended anything but a quiet, uneventful life for the next ten hours.

"Your lodge keeper," said he, "undoubtedly went back and wrote a similar message after you had captured this."

Then, curiously enough, he turned and shot at Virginia one of the same questions I had asked immediately after I had read it:

"Your luggage—yours and your father's—is that in the cloakroom at the Tours station?"

He barely waited for her affirmative nod before he asked another question:

"And the chemical formula for your father's secret, is that, by any unlucky chance, contained in those hand bags?"

"No," said she, "that has never left my father's person."

"That's well for the present," said he. "We shall have a few hours of leisure. Because, unless I am greatly mistaken, that cloakroom will be looted to-night. We can count on the preoccupation of our friend, the enemy, until to-morrow morning. But after to-night—" he broke off abruptly—"well," he concluded, with a return to

his quiet, half-amused manner, "to-morrow we will discuss what we shall do to-morrow."

He paused there a moment and looked at me with a smile. Then, as if it were the simplest thing in the world, he said:

"Young Mr. Duggleby arrived this morning in Paris. He took the road to Tours this afternoon, and he is now, in all probability, not a dozen miles away."

"What!" I gasped.

"Did you not expect it," he asked, still smiling, "when I ventured the prediction that the cloakroom in the Tours station would be looted to-night? Yes," he went on, "a man I employed to provide me with an extra pair of eyes informed me of his arrival this morning. And this afternoon, just beyond Orleans, I passed a car *en panne* at the roadside. I was keeping a sharp lookout, and though I flashed by rather quickly, I was sure of what I saw. There were three men in the car, and one of them was swearing in English, and in a most terrifying manner, at the chauffeur, who was at work on the tire. Mr. Duggleby is a very remarkable young man, and I think I should know him anywhere. At any rate, I knew him to-night."

"You didn't recognize any of the other men in the car, did you?" I asked.

"I don't know," he said. "At the time, I

thought I did, but I would not give five sous for that opinion now."

"What do you mean?" Virginia asked.

"I mean," said he, "that I have failed most lamentably in practicing the very thing that I have been preaching to my young friend here for the past month. I have permitted my prejudices to render me absolutely incompetent to observe accurately."

"Go on," said I; "tell me what you mean."

"Let me tell you my whole story from the beginning. A patient called upon me this afternoon. He did not send in his card by my valet, but remained, anonymously, in my reception room until I came out to see him. Then he handed me his card. Upon it was engraved the name of Mr. Christopher Morton.

"The instant I read the name it flashed into my mind that this unusual procedure of handing me his card in person was a deliberately laid trap to betray me into an exclamation of surprise. I doubt now that it was a trap at all. If it was, I did not fall into it. I quietly asked my visitor what he wanted of me. He told me that his nerves were troubling him; that he had come to me on the recommendation of his family physician, a man I knew. He was a model patient, if he was a patient at all, for he gave me an exhaustive list

of symptoms, without adding any that were irrelevant and without repeating any of those that he had enumerated. The symptoms made an almost perfectly typical case of neurasthenia.

"Now, as I tell you, I was convinced from the beginning that the man was an impostor. I should have believed anyone to be an impostor who handed me a card with that name engraved on it, for since you had bought that ticket for Tours this morning I had not entertained the slightest doubt that you were Christopher Morton himself. I suspected his list of symptoms because they were all so perfectly typical. I believed he had committed them to memory out of a text-book of my own upon the subject of that disease.

"Now, not to bore you with unnecessary details and technicalities, there was, I think, a certain ground for suspicion in what he told me, quite apart from my own prejudices. There is nothing in nature so rare as the perfectly normal. When you find symptoms of a disease running absolutely true to type, there are moderate grounds for the presumption that the disease is simulated, hysterically or otherwise."

"I suppose," I remarked, "that the man may have been an impostor from a medical standpoint and still be the real Christopher Morton."

"Yes," he said, "you are right. That is en-

tirely possible. I did try one experiment on him. I told him he was undoubtedly suffering from neurasthenia; that rest from the distractions of Paris was what he needed, and I advised him to retire to his chateau in the Touraine in search of it. Undoubtedly, at that he flashed at me a little glance of surprise. But he recovered himself instantly. 'Oh,' he said politely, 'I wasn't aware that I had the honor to be so well known to you.' With that he promised to put my advice into immediate effect, and shortly thereafter took his leave."

"What did he look like?" I asked.

"About your age, about your size and coloring. He was clean shaven, but he bore what might pass for a family resemblance to yourself. He was obviously a gentleman. He spoke good French—almost as good as yours."

"And," I prompted him, "you thought that you saw him in the car with Duggleby on the way down here?"

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. "How do I know?" said he. "I thought I did, but when I thought that, I was under the impression that he was a mere tool or accomplice of the Dugglebys. I never should have thought of it but for that prejudice. I had only time for one look as I went flying by, and that look I directed at Dug-

gleby. Well, we are sure of him, at any rate. We know he is at hand and that he means mischief."

At that he rose and came over toward me.

"There is the end of my adventure," he said.

CHAPTER XIX

THE MAN I WAS

THEN, resting his hand affectionately on my shoulder, he went on:

"I hope that in after years you may not think of me, Monsieur Barras, as a person entirely without mercy; but I have asked difficult things of you before, and I am afraid I must ask another now. I want to hear what Miss Heatherfield can tell me, or what she is willing to tell me of the man she believes you to be. And I am going to ask her to tell it to me alone."

The request was altogether unexpected, and I'm afraid that in the first moment of my surprise I did not receive it with very good grace.

"If I have done difficult things before, monsieur," I said, "it has been because I was able to see the reason. But what possible reason can there be for keeping me in the dark any longer than necessary?"

"Answer me a question first," he said. "Answer it truly and without regard either to your

hopes or to the presence of Miss Heatherfield there beside you. What has been the effect upon your memory of these hours you have had with her to-day? Does the sight of her, the sound of her voice, bring up old associations, however vague?"

I had to think a minute before I could answer him, and when I did, the nature of the answer I must make surprised me.

"No," said I; "if anything, it has been the other way about. Her actual presence, the sound of her voice, seem to make my old pictures and dreams recede and grow fainter."

He nodded. "Then you see the reason now for yourself, Monsieur Barras. But you're a good lad. Ninety-nine out of a hundred honest men would have lied then. And I'll promise you this. If I think, as your medical adviser, that you may hear the story, then you shall hear it to-night, only I must hear it first and have the opportunity to determine."

I bade Virginia a reluctant good night and nodded to the doctor.

"Come to my room when you've finished, anyway, even if it's only to tell me that I'm not to be told anything. I'll wait up for you."

"Very well," said the doctor.

He had asked Virginia for half an hour, but

for more than twice as long as that I paced my solitary chamber restlessly, glancing impatiently at my watch every other minute. It seemed impossible that any human communication could take so long—at least my petulant resentment told me that.

I was beginning to wonder whether he had not forgotten the last half of his promise altogether and gone to bed without even coming to tell me that he thought it best to tell me nothing, when I heard a light tap on the door. I had not even heard the footfall which preceded it.

"Come in," I called rather gruffly.

"May I?" said a voice. "Are you sure you want me to?"

And then the door opened slowly and I saw, not the doctor, but Virginia herself. No picture that my dreams reported, and no sight my waking eyes had seen, had ever been as beautiful as was the woman who stood there now in my doorway, waiting my invitation to come in. She seemed to read it in my face, for without another word from me she entered and closed the door behind her.

"You've come—yourself, to tell me what you've been telling the doctor?" I questioned, wondering and half in doubt, for the thing seemed too good to be true.

"I'm not sure," she answered. "That shall

be as you say, after I have told you what I shall have to tell you first."

"I don't want to be selfish," said I. "I mustn't ask you to tell me anything that will be painful to you to repeat. I shouldn't want to hear from you more than you want to tell, Virginia."

Her color had been high before, but now, for just an instant, it flamed still higher and her eyes burned with a sudden light.

"I know," I went on, "I ought to apologize to you for calling you by that name, but I want to, somehow. It's the only name I really know you by."

"Yes," she said; "I want you to call me that, too. And it isn't the fear of the pain that makes me hesitate about telling you the story I just told M. de Villiers. I—I begged him to let me tell you, and he consented, at last, only very reluctantly. He said, when he had heard it all, that, as your doctor, he couldn't advise my telling you. He feared it might retard your recovery. But on personal grounds, he said, if you wished still to know and I was anxious still to tell you, he felt that he couldn't refuse. Only he wanted me to give you that message first and let you decide."

She had spoken in a rather abstracted manner, as one repeating something, something that her

own heart was not in. And at the end she waited, rather tensely, I thought, for my decision. I did not keep her waiting long.

"That's understood, then," said I. "For this little half hour I'm going to cease to be a case of M. de Villiers's. I want for once to be a human being instead."

Her eyes brightened with sudden tears. "It takes a word like that to make me realize the courage you show every hour," she said.

The night was warm, and my room, lighted by guttering, smoky candles, had become close. I pulled my great window wide open upon its creaking hinges, and placed the one chair which the room boasted in the embrasure. The moon was still an hour high in the sky and shining slantwise upon the white walls and tiled roofs of the little village.

"Sit here," I told Virginia.

I extinguished the candles, and the room was hardly darker thereby. Then, opposite to where she sat in the embrasure of the window, I brought the little pair of carpeted steps that gave access to my tall four-poster bed, and seated myself facing her.

"Now tell me the story," said I.

But she sat for a while in silence, gazing out over the house tops, before she began.

"The man I knew lived in Cleveport, that horrible, horrible city that has grown, like a fringe, about the great shipyards of the Morton-Duggleby Company. He was very poor. When my father first became acquainted with him he was working as a laborer—a common, unskilled laborer—in one of the steel mills. Afterwards, at my father's suggestion, almost at his insistence, he taught himself shorthand and secured a clerical position. He talked very little about himself, even to my father and to me, and not at all to anyone else, but it was evident that he was educated far above the position in which we found him. The whole passion and purpose of his life seemed to be to share the labors and sorrows of the unfortunate people who lived and worked in that dreadful city. He seemed to try to bear the whole load upon his single shoulders, and it seemed sometimes to my father, as well as to me, that the effort would kill him.

"I told you this evening how I tried to play the philanthropist there in Cleveport, to the neglect of my father; how I worked and taught and did the little I could among the poor there. Well, it was his interest in those unfortunate people that excited mine. He taught me—taught me, I believe, all the real humanity I ever knew."

"How long did you know him there at Cleveport?" I asked.

"It is about two and a half years since I first met him. It is about a year since he disappeared——"

"After having betrayed your father's trust in him?" I asked.

"I never could believe that," she said quickly. "I believed him dead. It was only for a moment when I saw you, alive, and thought you were he, that my father's explanation occurred to me. But I do not believe in it now."

"You told the doctor," said I, "that the man you knew was not Christopher Morton. Might he not have been, after all?"

"Oh—you don't know Cleveport," she said, a little irrelevantly it seemed to me. "You can't even dream of the horrors of a place like that. It needn't have been horrible if there had been a grain of humanity in the men who were responsible for the conditions. Christopher Morton was contented to live in Paris upon the wealth that these poor, oppressed, wretched people were earning for him. Oh, I know that sounds altruistic and absurd, but Cleveport would make anyone talk that way. And when you ask me to believe that the man I worked with there for a year and a half —the man who was giving his life to accomplish

what amounted to so little in that great total of misery—" She broke off, and completed the sentence with a shiver.

"Is there any other reason why you are so sure?" I asked.

She hesitated a little and her lips trembled. "Yes," she said, "there is. I think if that had been his secret, he—he would have told me."

"Did he ever tell you anything, that man you knew, about what his life had been before he came to Cleveport—about his childhood or the circumstances which had put him into that place in life where you found him?"

"No," she said. "He never told us anything at all. When we first met him, we asked him some innocent questions, but it seemed that they hurt him; that the subject was, for some reason, painful to him; so, of course, we never pressed him for answers. And after we had come to know him as we did, the man himself was enough without any past."

There was another silence between us after that. It was I who finally broke it.

"Virginia," I began, "was it one evening, later than usual, that your father came home to tell you that his laboratory had been robbed? Was supper for three people set ready on the table? Was the man you have been telling me about playing

the piano while he waited with you for your father to come home? Was the thing he played a string of extempore variations of his own on the old nursery tune 'London Bridge'?"

At the first of my questions her face, there in the moonlight, had turned chalk white. Her eyes burned brighter and brighter, and her gaze seemed to be searching the innermost recesses of my soul. And as I finished, she cried out, half voicelessly:

"Morton! Morton!" and flung herself upon her knees beside me and held me fast, fast in the embrace of her young arms.

"Morton—" she repeated in a whisper. She was sobbing, shuddering, but it was with the excess of an overwhelming joy.

For a moment, giddy and unresisting, I let the force of that current sweep me away. I loved her and she loved me. And love was all that mattered. What other fact could there be in all the universal cosmos that could matter; that could dare to raise its head and hiss dissent, in the face of this one stupendous verity?

Holding her tight in my own arms now, I kissed her hair, her forehead, her eyes, and, last of all, her warm, responsive lips. The rest of the world was nothing but a pretense, a picture. We two, alive, fast in each others' arms—we were the world.

Suddenly, with her hands upon my shoulders, she thrust herself a little away, out at arm's length, where, once more, she could look into my face.

"Is that all you remember," she whispered unsteadily, "all you remember of that day?"

"It was not memory," said I; "at least I dare not call it that. It was a dream I had on shipboard, a dream from which I wakened to see you and your father passing by me on the deck."

"And the dream tells you no more than that?"

"No," said I. "What is there more to tell, Virginia?"

"There is this—" Her eyes widened and she searched my face. "Oh, try, *try* to remember! Now as I tell you, try to call the memory back! There is this. On that day, that very same day, in the old brick church in Cleveport, you and I were married!"

My hands dropped away from her, lifeless, and I reeled a little bit giddily. For a moment her hands remained on my shoulders, and her imploring eyes searched mine for the spark that was not there.

Then, with a sob, she sank down, crouching, on the floor and buried her face in her hands.

With all the force of my will I steadied myself, fought my way back out of that welter of emotion to solid rock again. If I were anything that de-

served to be called a man, I must be strong now for her as well as for myself. I did not speak to her, did not try any of the conventional ways to calm her. Instead, I went to the window and, leaning against the casement, stood looking out.

After a while she rose and came and stood beside me. "You understand the virtue of silence, Morton," she said. "You always did."

"Why do you call me that?"

"It was the name I learned to call you by," she answered unsteadily. "The name of the man in Cleveport was Morton Smith."

I saw by the suddenly renewed tension of her figure and the way she caught her breath that she had not pronounced that name without a hope that it would serve to call back the past, or at least some part of it, to me. But it did not bring even the faintest gleam, not even a half-placed feeling of familiarity. And seeing that this was so, suddenly, and I think involuntarily, she shrank a little away from me.

"Oh," she breathed hardly above a whisper, "how can you be *you,* if you've forgotten all that? There's nothing?" she went on in a tone of hopeless questioning, "no memory that comes back now after I've told you all? No gleam that suggests a returning memory?"

"Nothing," said I; "nothing but those faint,

half-lighted dreams that I told you of. And even they seem fading."

I had answered her with only half my mind. The other half was still busy with that despairing exclamation of hers: "How can you be you!" And dimly, then, there came the suggestion of an answer. And the answer was, that I might not be one man, but two. Nay, if that were true, why not three or half a dozen? There were tragedies like that in the world, I knew; figures of men complete in body and mind, but body and mind not a permanent habitation for a human soul—for that essential, innermost thing that calls itself I, but a mere temporary lodging, a house to let, occupied now by one fugitive spirit and now by another.

What if that were true? What if this counterfeit presentment of a man who stood beside Virginia now, the image of the man she loved, talking to her in his voice, reminding her of him with his unconscious, characteristic actions, were really and in truth nothing more than the temporary "Simon Barras" that the doctor so playfully christened him that day in his room at the hotel? Morton Smith had occupied that body once and gone away. Had there been any previous occupants? It was likely enough.

That was my train of thought, and I stopped

it short. It might be true, but it was inconceivable. A man cannot doubt his own identity and remain sane. Even as I stood there, shaken and horrified with the idea that had come over me, I was conscious of a clamorous, turbulent ego that would not be denied—who intended to assert his rights and insist upon them.

"Yet," Virginia said, "you did not forget it all. You remembered my face, my name; remembered—that you loved me—didn't you?"

At that I caught up her hands and kissed them.

"It was the picture of your face and the love that went with it which gave me the courage and the determination to escape from Dr. Berry's asylum, that set me trying to find my lost self. And now that I know that that lost self is the man you loved and married, I have twice the courage and twice the determination to find him. We shall find him, Virginia, somewhere in the world, and we shall bring him back."

She raised my hands, which still were holding hers, and pressed them against her breast.

"That's all I want," she said—"to know, I mean, that you remembered me and that you loved me. What does anything else matter but that? Isn't that enough to know; that we love each other and—that we're married, Morton, dear?"

How could I make her understand that I was

not the man she married? That until I could summon back the hours which must live in that lost man's memory, of casual acquaintance with her, and friendship and love and intimacy, I was, in spite of my dream pictures, hardly more than a stranger to her!

I tried, but my words went wide of the mark. She listened, untroubled, uncomprehending, for a while to the thing I was trying to tell her. Finally, with a little laugh, she laid her hand upon my lips.

"What does it matter?" she said. "I can remember for both of us. You're not to worry any more, not now at least."

Both her palms were pressing against my temples then. The next moment she slipped them back and clasped her fingers behind my head, drew it forward and laid her cool cheek against my bearded one.

"You feel a little feverish," she said. "I don't want you to be ill, Morton, but if you were ill, oh, how I should love nursing you."

"No more!" I said hoarsely. "No more to-night! To-morrow—to-morrow we will talk."

She drew back and looked at me, wondering, but still untroubled. Then, with a smile of divine maternal tenderness, she kissed me, once more, upon the lips, and was gone.

For a while, a minute, perhaps, or perhaps a

half hour, I stood staring at the shadowy door which had closed behind her. At the end of it I went out into the corridor, and seeing a light in the doctor's room, I entered without ceremony.

"I want something that will make me sleep," said I. "I can't answer questions to-night. I must sleep first."

He had been pacing the room, clad in his dressing gown, when I entered. Without a word, with no more than a keen, penetrating glance, he went to his bag and drew out a hypodermic syringe. I did not speak, either, until he had filled it, and I had silently bared my arm for the needle thrust.

"Doctor," said I, as the little plunger went home, "if a man has two personalities, each distinct from the other, is he justified in acting as if he had any right to either of them?"

He started; looked me full in the face. "Where did you pick up a morbid idea like that?" he demanded, with signs of a more severe displeasure than he often showed. "Drop it! It isn't a safe sort of toy to play with, a notion like that. It is with such ideas that men go mad."

And yet could he have disowned the same idea himself? Something I had seen in his face made me doubt it.

CHAPTER XX

IN THE ROAD

CONTRARY to my expectations, I must have gone off, almost immediately, to sleep, for the next thing I knew, after my head had touched the pillow, I was sitting bolt upright in bed listening to the roar of a motor car in the street, outside my window. It had come to a stop before the inn entrance, but, as if their pause were to be but momentary, the chauffeur had merely thrown out his clutch, and had not killed his engine.

Presently, above the throb of the racing pistons, I heard a voice cry out in French:

"Look alive in there, somebody! How far is it to Tours?"

It was only just past dawn, on an early July morning, and the little village of Mettray, including our inn, was still fast asleep. The shouted question received no response. But evidently the travelers were in earnest. The jingle of the inn bell told me that one of them had dismounted from the car.

"How far is it to Tours?" the voice repeated.

Then I heard a window opening somewhere and the landlord's sleepy voice speaking in reply.

"Nine kilometers. Can't you read the sign-board, imbecile?"

Evidently the travelers saw fit to ignore the epithet. There was a murmur of voices in inaudible discussion, and then the chauffeur stopped the motor.

"Well," said the man who was doing the talking for the travelers, "with two flat tires, even nine kilometers seems a long way. Can you give us a decent breakfast?"

"But most assuredly," said the landlord, becoming affable at once at the prospect of profit. "Wait just a moment, messieurs, and I will open the door."

"Well, be quick about it," said the other man. "We have been all night coming here from Chartres and have lost our way a dozen times. We are famished with hunger, and one of our party has met with an accident."

The window closed with a slam. Then, after a rather long delay, I heard the creaking of the great inn door. Evidently the landlord had succeeded in rousing a porter, whose tardiness he was berating by way of apology for his own.

"They sleep like the dead, these servants," he

said. Then, apparently addressing the man himself, he exclaimed ferociously: "Come, thou, great camel that thou art, and take the luggage of these messieurs up to the grand apartment on the first floor. They will wish to make a toilet before breakfast."

"We have no luggage with us," said the spokesman, after a moment's hesitation. And then he added: "We had it sent on from Chartres by *grande vitesse*."

Then I heard steps mounting the stairs, and my interest in the little episode seemed about over. I lay back in bed and tried to go to sleep again, but just then something occurred to me that struck me as a little curious. The discussion between the two men in the car had been too low to be audible through my open window, but from the inflection of it I suddenly became convinced that it had been carried on in English. Well, even if it were, I told myself, there was nothing really strange about that.

Trifling indeed as the whole incident was, no doubt it proved sufficient to put an end to my very brief night's sleep. After a quarter of an hour of restless tossing had convinced me that this was so, I rose, dressed as quietly as possible in order not to disturb my companions in the adjoining rooms, and made my way down the inn stairs to the street.

The car stood there in the road, just where the chauffeur had stopped it, and that functionary was hard at work upon the tires. The car was a big limousine, evidently intended for town rather than for country use. But there could be no doubt that it had been making a wild night of it. At the sound of my step the chauffeur started a little, looked quickly around, and directed a rather searching glance at me. Then, quite as quickly, he turned his back and went on with his work.

I tucked my walking stick under my arm and set out rather aimlessly down the road, over which I had driven with Virginia and her father the afternoon before. It was an absolutely entrancing morning; cool, sparkling, fragrant, and with that curious quality which can only be described by the word " intimate," which to me, at least, always distinguishes the French out of doors from out of doors anywhere else.

Strange as it may seem, I trudged along in a happy and rather careless mood. The gray cloud of mystery, which hung so heavily over my past, and out of which I had seen so many lurid, menacing flashes, seemed this morning to have shrunk and withdrawn itself, till it was no larger upon my horizon than a man's hand. Everything would come right, somehow, and soon at that. There was nothing to worry about. In an hour or two I

should see Virginia and should be sharing this entrancing day with her.

I increased my pace a little to keep time with the jigging nursery tune which was running through my head, and with my walking stick decapitated the crimson poppies which flowered along the roadside.

The sound of a motor car coming down the road behind me had been in my ears for some time before I became fully aware of it. It was running at a great pace, as motor cars do along the white, smooth national roads of France. When I did become aware of it I was startled to find it so near, and had no more than comfortable time to step out of the roadway before it flashed past me. The cloud of dust which it sucked up behind itself screened it almost immediately from my eyes, but I had time to see that it was the same car whose occupants had breakfasted at our little inn at Mettray. I thought I saw, through the veil of dust, a face gazing at me through the little back window, and the sight of the face made me think instantly of Alexander Duggleby.

But I dismissed the thought impatiently. It had been absolutely impossible to distinguish the features, and the likeness I had seen was probably wholly imaginary and fanciful. Of course it was not in the least impossible that Duggleby might be

in the car, but there was no sane and valid reason for thinking so. I told myself, with a shrug, that I was not going to begin seeing goblin Dugglebys in every dark corner and behind every bush, like a frightened child.

So I walked on, steadily enough, down the road, though the careless gayety of my mood had departed.

Presently there arose on one side of the roadway a high stone wall, forming the boundary of some large private park, and near the corner of it was a great solid wooden gate. A sense of complete familiarity with it prevented its attracting my attention very strongly, but as I was passing by the gate I saw something that did, namely, the curving tracks of the automobile which had passed me so short a time before on the road. Evidently it had turned in here. Even then my mind occupied itself with the phenomenon only in a purely mechanical way. It registered the observation without interpreting it at all. If I had given one thought—one single thought—to the significance of the thing that was under my eyes, I should never have done what I proceeded to do—never should have gone walking on, careless of danger, fatuous in the fancied security of broad daylight and the public road.

The wall, which continued as far as my eye could reach on the left side of the road, now had a coun-

terpart to itself on the right. So that ahead of me, at least as far as the next curve, a quarter of a mile away, my road was, in fact, nothing but a trench with sheer walls, eight feet high, or so, on both sides of it.

I had gone, perhaps a hundred yards past the gate, when I heard it creak and, simultaneously, the racing whir of the motor came to my ears. Looking round, I saw the big limousine come backing out into the road. Then it reversed, and resumed its original direction, coming along toward me, upon the walled-in road, innocently enough, and not very fast.

It is curious how the mind endeavors to compensate for its deficiencies, either occasional or permanent. A moment ago when I had passed that gate the whole enginery of my thought had lain dormant. My eyes had reported certain facts, but my mind had stuffed them into the first pigeonhole without looking to see what they meant. But now, as if to atone for that folly, it sprang into a state of most unnatural activity.

The occupants of that car had stopped and breakfasted at the little inn at Mettray, giving as a reason that the nine kilometers between them and Tours seemed too far. They would not have done that if their destination at that time had been this green wooden gate in the wall. They could have

turned in there for no other purpose, then, than to give themselves, once more, an opportunity which they had wasted when they flashed by me on the road a few minutes earlier. They had turned into that gate to wait for me to go by, simply in order that they might come up behind me again. That was what they were doing now. There was nothing alarming about their appearance or about the speed of the car. They were running well in the middle of the fairly broad road, and the natural thing for a pedestrian to do would be to turn out a little to one side to give them room to pass, and walk on at his own gait, without even so much as turning his head.

But I knew—knew all in a flash—that if I ventured to do that, my battered body would be found lying, crumpled up, in the road by the next passer-by; and Alexander Duggleby would have accomplished his purpose.

The whole of that train of thought flashed through my mind in an instant. I had seen and comprehended the entire situation before the automobile was twenty paces nearer me than it had been when it started toward me in the road.

But, even understanding fully what was in my enemy's mind, what was I to do? The road, as I have said, was nothing but a trench, and it continued so for a full quarter of a mile ahead. The

first instinctive plan that suggested itself to me was to run. And yet I saw instantly that if they were seriously determined to kill me, I had about as much chance to escape them in that way as a man pursued down a railway tunnel by a locomotive. They would overtake me and run me down, at leisure, before I could cover half the distance.

An automobile steers more easily and accurately when it is running fast than when it is running slowly. My flight would only give them the hundred yards or so that they needed to get up speed. Its speed was increasing now, but still it was not going very fast.

After my one brief glance at them when they turned out into the road, I had not looked back nor shown, in any way, that I suspected them of any evil intent toward me. I had turned out a little to the right, though not to the edge of the road by any means, and had walked along without quickening my pace in the least. By the time they had come up to within ten paces of me, my plan was fully formed. When they got a little nearer, I would look suddenly around, as if startled to find them so close, and would then spring quickly to one side; but instead of springing away from the car and toward the edge of the road, as I knew they would expect me to do, I would make my leap

in the other direction, toward the car, and into the middle of the road.

The curious feature about this plan was, that while it offered, probably, the best hope of escape if I were right in thinking that they meant to kill me; on the other hand, if I were wrong, if all they meant to do was to pass harmlessly by, my plan would frustrate that attempt as well as the other, and I should meet a certain death under their wheels. The man driving that car would certainly wrench his steering wheel around, one way or the other, when I stood still in the road and looked back, and the direction of my leap would equally certainly surprise him. I should owe my life, should I succeed in saving it, to the mere fact that he deliberately intended to kill me.

For about the period of the sharp spit of a lightning flash my mind hesitated; then took its decision. I stopped short, turned about rather wildly, and made my spring toward the middle of the road.

Well, I had guessed right. For the car, at the same instant, made a sharp swerve toward the edge of the road where the driver had expected my spring to have landed me. He had increased the speed at the same instant—increased it so suddenly that the great car gave a bound like the leap of a wild animal. It was as clear and remorseless an

attempt at assassination as it would have been if they had opened fire upon me.

I stood quite still in the road and watched them as they flashed past, half expecting to see the car stop, turn around and make another rush at me. But such an attempt must have resulted in inevitable failure. I should have plenty of time to get out of the other end of the trench before they could overtake me, and Duggleby was too clever a man to do anything futile. The car rode straight on, without a pause. In a moment it had flashed around the curve at the farther end of the trench.

I suppose the whole episode, from the time when the car had first emerged from the green gate until I had thus lost sight of it, had occupied something less than a minute, but I should never pray for a long life if it were to contain many minutes like that. A short one would seem plenty long enough.

CHAPTER XXI

THE AFFAIR IN THE CLOAKROOM

IT was about an hour later that I climbed the stairway in the inn and knocked at the doctor's door. The quick relief with which his face lighted up at the sight of me convinced me that my unexplained absence had worried him.

He admitted as much when I taxed him with it. "I fell asleep on my sofa just about dawn. When I wakened I was conscious that an automobile had stopped here before the inn for a while, and then gone on again. And when a little later I went to your room and found it empty, my mind began to play fantastic variations for me upon the theme. I imagined that, by some superhuman power, Duggleby had tracked me here and found you, and silently made way with you. In spite of the common-sense explanation that you had merely gone for a walk, I was strongly tempted to send out a searching party."

"Well," said I, dropping into a chair, "you predicted last night that our friend Duggleby

would soon give us an evidence of his activities; that prediction was right, although you went wrong in selecting the Tours station as the scene of it."

"What!" cried the doctor. "Have you seen him?"

"Neither seen him nor heard the sound of his voice, but, for all that, he made an attempt to assassinate me not more than an hour ago, out here in broad daylight and on the public road. I am as sure it was he as I would be if I had seen him."

With that introduction, I gave the doctor a minute account of my adventures since I had heard the automobile arrive in front of the inn. He was gravely silent for a moment after I had finished. Then he came across to me and rested his hand affectionately on my shoulder.

"Thank God for a quick mind and a good courage," he said, "for they evidently saved your life. But the next thing on our programme is breakfast. You must be famished, and even I am quite ready for something."

"Have you seen the Heatherfields this morning?" I asked.

"Just for a word of inquiry about Mr. Heatherfield's condition," he said. "He seems quite himself again this morning. They are breakfasting together now, I believe. It seemed better, both to Miss Heatherfield and to me, that she should

remain quite alone with him for a few uninterrupted hours, as she will have much to explain to him, and the explanation might be made more difficult by the intrusion of either one of us."

The doctor had already rung the bell, and presently there knocked at the door a man, half porter, half waiter, probably the same one whom the landlord had summoned from his early morning slumbers to assist in receiving the untimely guests. There was nothing sleepy about him now, however. He fairly bristled with excitement. Thinking he might have some news for us, I was about to draw him into conversation, but the doctor took the affair out of my hands.

"An omelette for two," he said, "and coffee. Serve it here as quickly as you can. That's all."

"Yes, monsieur," said the man submissively, and he disappeared.

"I had an idea," I ventured, "that he might have told us something we should have found interesting."

"He might and he will," said the doctor, "when he comes back with the breakfast. He will tell us all the more if he has no idea that we are in the least interested to hear his tale."

The doctor had rightly estimated his character. This became evident a few minutes later when the man returned. He bustled about, setting the table

in our sitting room—what an age it seemed since Virginia and I had dined in that same room the night before — clattering the plates, making all sorts of little motions to draw our attention, and evidently only waiting to catch the eye of one of us to burst out into the story he had to tell. But neither of us would so much as look at him. At last he said, in a feeble, apologetic sort of way:

"Of course messieurs have heard the news?"

"I dare say we have," said the doctor serenely.

"Pardon, monsieur," said the waiter; "I think that is scarcely possible. It only happened last night, and very late."

"Indeed," said the doctor, "what is it? Has the housemaid eloped with the cook?"

"No, monsieur," said the waiter, "I am the housemaid myself, and monsieur the proprietor, he is the cook."

"Proceed with your news," said the doctor. "I suppose you will be incapable of serving breakfast until you have rid yourself of it."

"It occurred in Tours, messieurs, a most astonishing outrage. It occurred in the railway station very late at night, when there were but few people, and those but half awake, in the waiting room. But there might have been a thousand, for these men showed the cunning and resource of the devil himself."

"Apaches from Paris, I suppose," said the doctor. "What did they do?"

"No doubt monsieur is right," assented the waiter. "One of them appeared at the door of the *consigne*, which at that hour is tended by an old woman. The wicket was unlocked, and he entered, fumbling in his pockets as if to find his receipt. A companion of his appeared at that moment in the doorway. 'Come in here,' said the first man. 'I shall find the receipts in a moment and we have no time to waste; it will take this old woman an hour.' Whereupon the second man, who had the strength of three, monsieur, and the cunning and quickness of the devil—the second man entered the room. At that same moment a third man appeared in the doorway, thus preventing the persons in the waiting room seeing what was going on. At that, the second man, slipping around behind the old woman, seized her, and before she could cry out, clapped a handkerchief saturated in chloroform over her mouth and nose. When she became unconscious, they selected three or four of the bags and went away. No one knew anything whatever about the affair until, in the course of time, the old woman recovered consciousness. They were most frightful savages, she said; men of indescribable brutality. It is thought they went away in an automobile. In that case they are

one hundred miles away at least. But the arm of the police is long, monsieur, and the telegraph is swifter than their automobile. They will be intercepted, depend upon it."

"Did the old woman make any resistance?" inquired the doctor.

The waiter shrugged his shoulders. "What could she do against that emissary of the devil?" he said. "She had a pair of scissors in her hand, and with them she struck repeatedly at the hand which was clapped over her mouth and nose, but he minded that no more than pin pricks."

That appeared to be the substance of the waiter's story, for though he continued talking about it all the while he was serving our breakfast, he added nothing to the first recital. The thing most strongly impressed upon his mind seemed to be the opportunity for the flight offered by the automobile.

"They will be arrested," he prophesied confidently; "but mark my words, it will be at Brest or Bordeaux or the Spanish frontier. They had a long start; but the arm of the police is longer."

It was a relief when the waiter had gone and we were able to talk over the extraordinary tale which had interested us so much more than we had dared allow him to see. If anything more than the waiter's account had been needed to convince us,

beyond the possibility of a doubt, that Alexander Duggleby was responsible for the outrage, my own adventure with him that morning made it absolutely clear. They had driven out of town, probably in the general direction of Paris, stealing softly, no doubt, past the sleeply little *octroi* stations of the towns along their route. Then, having gone perhaps half way to Paris, they had played the old trick of doubling, and had come back openly and ostentatiously to Tours.

"He was less than an hour from Tours when I passed him on the road at eight o'clock last evening," said the doctor. "He has had plenty of time."

"And then there's this," I added, "that makes it conclusive. The man who did the talking out there in the road to the landlord of this inn mentioned that one of his party had had an accident. That must have been Duggleby, for you will remember the waiter said the old woman had attacked him with the scissors. She probably did more damage than the waiter gave her credit for. All the same," I concluded, after a moment's pause, "I wish I might have been peeping out through my shutters when they left their car to come into the inn. I am absolutely sure it was Duggleby, but, at the same time, it would be satisfactory to have enjoyed one good look at him."

"He's not the man I should have looked at," said the doctor. "I am most interested in the identity of the others. What I should like to know is whether my patient of yesterday afternoon is one of the occupants of that car."

Before I could answer him, I heard a knock at the door, and somehow I knew who it was who sought admittance. I opened the door myself and stood face to face with Virginia. At sight of me the color came mantling up into her cheeks and forehead, and her eyes brightened and dimmed at once.

"Morton!" she said, "I did not know you had come back from your walk. I wish you had come and called me, and taken me with you."

In my heart I thanked God that I had not, although the sweet intimacy of the suggestion made me catch my breath and set my heart to racing.

"It is such a heavenly morning," she went on. "Was it a good walk? And did you have any adventures?"

I was reluctant to tell her, just then at any rate, so I laughed as easily as I could, and asked what adventures a man was likely to have walking down a French highway in the light of an early morning.

She looked at me rather searchingly, then slipped

her hand into mine and interlocked her fingers with it.

"You've come back safely, anyway," she said.

It was done quite frankly, quite simply; just as a wife might do it. Her love and her conviction left no room for doubt. I was hers and she was mine, mine altogether. And yet I could not take the gift she offered. It belonged to the other man, the lost man, to Morton Smith, if that was his name, a man to whom I was a total stranger.

She did not relinquish my hand as she turned to the doctor.

"I came on an errand," she said. "This note" —she held it out in her other hand—"came to my father by a special messenger only a few minutes ago. He is overjoyed in getting it, but I persuaded him to let me show it to you"—her glance, when she said the words, included me with the doctor— "to let me show it to you before he should act upon the invitation it contains."

As she spoke she handed a large square envelope, already torn open, to the doctor. He drew out the folded sheet of note paper which it contained, and read it aloud:

"My dear Mr. Heatherfield:

"By a very strange, and to me fortunate, chance, I have just learned that you and your daughter are, unless this comes too late, at the inn in Mettray, where I address this

note; and I have also learned that you called, unsuccessfully, upon me at Château la Mesle yesterday afternoon.

"It will give me great pleasure if you and Miss Heatherfield will take lunch with me at the chateau at one today. I came down quite unexpectedly yesterday afternoon, upon my physician's advice. The house, which has long been closed, is in a deplorable state of confusion, but if you can pardon the exiguity of a nomadic bachelor's hospitality, you will give me a great deal of pleasure. You were, as I think you must know, one of my father's most valued friends, and I have often heard him speak of you.

"Believe me,

"Yours most sincerely,

"CHRISTOPHER MORTON.

"P.S.—The messenger who brings this will take your answer. I hope very eagerly that it may be a favorable one for me."

CHAPTER XXII

AN INTIMATE STRANGER

THE doctor looked from Virginia's face to mine and back to hers again.

"The messenger is still waiting?" he asked.

"Yes," she said.

"This wants thinking over," he observed, plowing his fingers through his thick white hair. He moved an extra chair up to the table and invited us both to be seated. "I take it," he resumed, "from what you say of your father's feelings that he entertains very little doubt as to the good faith of the invitation, and the genuineness of the signature attached to it."

Her face betrayed a certain amount of disappointment, but no surprise.

"Then it doesn't seem genuine to you?" she asked. "Do you think it is nothing more than a trick?"

"I don't know what to think," said the doctor. "It's a just punishment upon me for the prejudices I entertained yesterday. But it is quite

clear," he went on, turning to me, "that we must first inform Miss Heatherfield of the news we have just had thrust upon us by the waiter; and must also tell her of the experiences which befell you on the road. We can't come to a decision in the present matter without taking both those episodes into account."

"I'd rather you told it," said I.

With admirable brevity he told her how the cloakroom in the Tours station had been looted, and followed the narrative with an account of my own matutinal adventure.

"And now for the note," he concluded.

"One thing is quite clear," said I. "There is a certain amount of ground for suspicion. In the first place, how does Christopher Morton know that you and your father are here at Mettray? And if he came by that information accidentally, why doesn't he explain in his note how he came by it?"

"On the contrary," said the doctor, "that, to me, is one of the strongest indications of his good faith. Any rogue could pump up an explanation that would sound plausible. Your wall-eyed lodge keeper and his mother may, very easily, have recognized the cabman who drove you out here, and a single question from a person of Mr. Morton's consequence—the real Mr. Morton—would have

got him the whole story. But a man who had no idea that his good faith would be questioned would not have been likely to put a long cumbersome explanation into a note. He'd save that until you met."

I interrupted: "Unless, of course, he was a clever enough rogue to rely upon our making that very interpretation."

"Yes, that's possible," admitted the doctor.

"And then add this," I continued. "Note the connection between his moves and Duggleby's. Duggleby comes to Paris. On that same day Morton comes to your office to consult you. Morton's lodge keeper sends a telegram to Duggleby's agent, with the result that Duggleby comes to Tours. On that very same day Morton comes to Tours also. Duggleby comes to this inn at dawn this morning, and at nine o'clock comes this note from Morton."

"He's telling the truth, though, when he says that M. de Villiers advised him to come down here." This was Virginia's first contribution to the talk. "That certainly wasn't Mr. Duggleby's doing."

The discussion ran on for half an hour. At the end of that time we were no nearer a decision than we had been at the beginning. It was, the doctor pointed out, perfectly possible, hardly even im-

probable, that the parallel between Duggleby's movements and Mr. Morton's was purely the result of accident. The fact that the doctor's patient had taken his advice and come straight to the chateau, which we knew belonged to Mr. Christopher Morton; that he wrote a note on the house stationery, inviting guests there to lunch with him, all established a strong presumption in his favor. No mere hired spy in Duggleby's service would have ventured to do that.

On the other hand, it was Morton's own lodge keeper who had betrayed us. And he could not have learned of our presence at the inn any more easily or promptly than through Duggleby himself.

"It's no use," said the doctor at last. "Whichever way your father acts, whether he accepts the invitation or declines it, he will leave us with a strong misgiving that he may have done the wrong thing. And the whole question comes down to this: On which side will it be wise for him to run the risk of error? How much does he stand to lose, in either case, if he goes wrong, or to win, in either case, if he goes right?"

"There certainly can't be much doubt of that," said I. "If the letter is written in bad faith, it is written, in all probability, at the dictation of Alexander Duggleby. You certainly would not

advise Miss Heatherfield and her father to risk their lives in that man's clutches."

"Certainly not," said the doctor. "But, as a matter of fact, is that the risk which will be involved? I am inclined to think not. Come, let us be methodical about it. Let us suppose two cases. In the first place, suppose this note to be written in perfectly good faith. Mr. Morton has heard that Mr. Heatherfield and his daughter are here. He is anxious to see his father's old friend. If Mr. Heatherfield accepts the invitation, his troubles are almost certainly at an end. This young man has the power, and evidently the inclination, to do him justice; to destroy absolutely the whole ingenious plot which the Dugglebys have constructed to defraud him. Now, still supposing the invitation to be written in good faith, what if Mr. Heatherfield declines it? He throws away an opportunity which it is highly unlikely will ever come again.

"But suppose the other case: This man, who signs himself Christopher Morton, is a mere tool of young Alexander Duggleby; the letter is written to entice your father to the chateau. Duggleby has already made one attempt to get possession of that secret formula. He made it last night when he looted the Tours station. As a result of that escapade he knows that that formula is, in all

probability, concealed upon Mr. Heatherfield's person. The easiest way to get it would be to lure him to the chateau and take it away from him. If Mr. Heatherfield declines the invitation, he escapes that trap and tells the enemy that he suspects him. He shows his cards to the enemy without getting a compensating glimpse of his. He is ignorant as to whether he has disappointed a friend or foiled an enemy, and waits for that enemy's next move."

"At least," I interrupted, "at least he avoids walking straight into the clutches of a thoroughly remorseless villain; for a man who has already attempted one assassination to-day will hardly hesitate to attempt another."

"My dear young friend," said the doctor, "pray distinguish. Mr. Duggleby wishes to murder you. Whoever you may be, whatever your connection with his life may be, he seems to find it impossible to remain in the same world with you. I should never allow *you* to go into that chateau with a less efficient protection than that of a squad of police. But Mr. Heatherfield's is an entirely different case. All that Duggleby wants from him is his formula. He would infinitely prefer taking it by fraud to taking it by force. He is no fool. He knows perfectly well that one murder is about all a man can hope, successfully, to bring off. I

will admit, on the supposition that this letter is a trap, that Mr. Heatherfield runs a chance of losing his formula, provided he carries it with him to the chateau; but that he runs any personal risk or that Miss Heatherfield would run any by accompanying him, I cannot admit to be possible."

"Then," said Virginia, "you think that father might go if he left his formula behind him, here in the inn?"

"Not here," said the doctor. "I would advocate no such risk as that. But if before venturing into the park at la Mesle he has first consigned his formula to the security of the vaults of the Crédit Lyonnais at Tours, he would be safeguarded in case this invitation is a trap, and would be still in a position to take advantage of the opportunity it offers, provided it turns out to be genuine."

Virginia's delight in this plan was manifest. I could see she was inclined to share her father's belief in the genuineness of the note, and his delight at the prospect of a successful termination to his mission.

"I am so glad you think we can go," she said.

Suddenly the doctor sprang to his feet. "I have it!" he cried. "The true plan—the only true plan. Your father shall not go to la Mesle without a formula. He shall construct it now before he starts, a beautiful, interesting looking series of

chemical reactions, which shall suffice to keep our friend Duggleby's mind occupied for a long time, supposing his hand is really in the business. The real formula will be safe in the bank. The amusing bit of chemical fiction will be in a packet upon your father's person where, until now, he has kept the real one, and the real one will be safe in the bank all the while.

"Don't you see," he demanded, turning upon me for corroboration, "don't you see how we shall unmask their batteries? We do not expose our own head above the intrenchments. We elevate an empty hat upon a stick."

It was impossible for me to feel any enthusiasm in his scheme, and I was a good deal surprised at Virginia's. "Don't you think," I ventured, "that even the doctor's scheme of drawing the enemy's fire may prove rather dangerous to your father? Do you think he will be equal to the excitement and danger of going to that chateau on purpose to be robbed, even of an imitation formula?"

Virginia shot at me a quick look of surprise. "But surely," she said, "you know father well enough—" And then she flushed to the forehead and bit her lips. "I am sorry," she resumed. "It is hard to—to remember. My father is not the weak old man that he must seem to you after what happened yesterday. That momentary weakness

was altogether exceptional with him. He has quite recovered this morning; he is his old self again. His only weakness—his only need of special care is, ordinarily, the mere result of his preoccupation. When anything commands his full attention the way this note does, one can count on his being courageous, prompt, and quick-witted. Except for actual force, I have no fear on his account. That fear M. de Villiers has done away with."

The doctor nodded approvingly, and after a further word or two, Virginia left the room to communicate to her father the result of our conference.

I had consented to the plan rather reluctantly, and now I added something to it. "There is this thing we can do, at any rate," said I. "We can act as a bodyguard to—to Miss Heatherfield and her father until the true formula is safely deposited in the bank. Whether Duggleby has anything to do with sending this note or not—I still believe he has—it would be fatuous folly to allow an old man to go about unprotected with such a piece of wealth upon his person while my would-be assassin was at large in the neighborhood."

The doctor assented heartily to this suggestion of mine, and, thus amended, we put the plan into execution. A little before noon, in the doctor's car, we set out, all together, from Mettray for

Tours, taking a circuitous route in order to avoid passing la Mesle on the way.

I met Virginia's father for the first time that day just before we started. He was, indeed, greatly changed from the day before. He seemed strong and vigorous, and in excellent spirits. I had wondered, rather uncomfortably, what his attitude toward myself would be. His manner instantly reassured me. Virginia, as the doctor had suggested, had evidently told him the whole of my story so far as any of us knew it. He was very grave, and rather distant and ceremonious, but this I took as springing rather from a fear of embarrassing me by a display of too lively a curiosity on his part, than from any lingering hostility or distrust.

The doctor's car devoured the miles between us and Tours in a very few minutes, and, at the end of a perfectly uneventful ride, we pulled up before the door of the Tours branch of the great bank which the doctor had suggested was the only safe depository for Mr. Heatherfield's formula. We accompanied him into the bank, and did not leave him till the precious envelope which contained it had been put into a steel box and consigned to the vault. Mr. Heatherfield's interest in the imitation formula, which now occupied its place in the oiled-silk bag which hung from around his neck, seemed

rather amused than serious. He regarded it, quite frankly, as a concession to the French doctor's love for romance, although he admitted, rather reluctantly, that it might turn out to have been a very wise precaution.

We saw them off, in the best of spirits, from the bank steps, watching them until the fiacre in which they were driving down the rue Nationale had disappeared. Then, left to our own resources, the doctor and I rather lazily set about our own affairs for the day.

We made a few purchases along the main street of the town, chiefly to supply the losses I had suffered in the theft of my hand bag. And then, as we were passing a barber shop, the doctor suddenly halted me.

"For the sake of an experiment," he asked, "should you be willing to sacrifice that rather becoming beard of yours? Mr. Christopher Morton is clean shaven. It might do no harm to pay him the compliment of imitating him."

"I am perfectly willing to sacrifice my beard," said I, "even in a less worthy cause. But are you still playing with that idea? I thought you had given it up utterly."

"Never mind the idea," said the doctor. "If you are willing to make the sacrifice, that's all I ask. It's curious we haven't thought of cutting it

off before. I remember in your notes on the first days of your adventures—the notes you so kindly permitted me to read that morning in the Holland House—you remarked that you had experienced a sort of vague surprise on finding that your face was bearded. You may look more natural to yourself without it."

We carried out his suggestion at once. But so far as immediate results were concerned, it produced nothing but a disappointment. When the barber was through with me, I took the hand glass he put into my hand, with a thrill of expectancy. But the face I saw there brought nothing back to me. It did not look strikingly unfamiliar, which promised us something, since I had never, since the recovery of my memory, seen myself without a beard.

I met the doctor's eye as I laid the glass down, and shook my head. That was all the answer he needed, though his face clouded for a moment with disappointment. But that expression soon disappeared, and the calm, alert, kindly look I knew so well replaced it. When we turned into the street again his one idea seemed to be to make me forget that we had tried any experiment at all.

We wandered, rather aimlessly, up the rue Nationale toward the hotel. "First impressions are the only things I can ever hope anything from,"

said I. " Yesterday when I drove down this street, on the way to la Mesle, everything I saw—the buildings, shop signs, the tram cars, the very loafers, and the stray dogs—seemed to awaken what were almost memories—seemed only to lack, by a mere hairbreadth, the power to bring my whole past back to me. To-day I am walking here completely unmoved. I might be in Pittsburg so far as memories and associations are concerned."

He seemed about to make me an answer, then suddenly checked himself. Turning to see what it was that attracted his attention, I noticed a man hurrying across the street, with the evident intention of accosting us. He was a large, rather dignified man, inclined to be corpulent, clad in the sort of clerical black coat which distinguishes the Protestant clergy in France. Dignified as he was, and a clergyman into the bargain, he was almost running across the street in his eagerness to address me. And he had his hat in his hand.

His face was absolutely unfamiliar to me, but it was simply beaming with delight at the sight of mine. " My dear boy! " he cried, clapping on his hat in order to grasp me with both arms. Then he went on speaking in English, but with a decided French accent: " My dear Christopher! I cannot express how good it is to see you, after all these years. I had about given up hope of you."

He stood off a little, to take a good look at me, and then embraced me, French fashion, on both cheeks. "My dear boy!" he repeated, this time in French. Then he seemed to realize, for the first time, that I was not alone. He turned to the doctor, with a little bow of apology: "You must forgive the intrusion, monsieur. It's a long time since Mr. Morton went away from us, and I have never seen him since the day he left Tours."

CHAPTER XXIII

DEJEUNER AT THE CHATEAU

FROM the moment when the pastor of the Protestant church at Tours greeted me there in the street as Christopher Morton, my own story runs on with hardly a momentary interruption. At the same time, another set of events, equally important to all of us concerned, was happening out at la Mesle. Of course the doctor and I knew nothing of Mr. Heatherfield's and Virginia's adventures until considerably later in the day. But this is, perhaps, the most convenient point in the narrative for relating them. It shall be done as briefly as possible.

The drive out to the chateau was accomplished without incident. Virginia herself felt a little uneasy when she saw the great carriage gate being opened by no less a person than the wall-eyed lodge keeper, the man she and her father had met hurrying down the road toward the telegraph office when they had driven out the day before. Mr. Heatherfield, however, refused to be alarmed by the circumstance.

At the chateau itself they found the great doors of ceremony thrown wide open in anticipation of their coming, and the man who called himself Christopher Morton waiting in the doorway to welcome them.

Luncheon was announced almost immediately upon their arrival and was served in a pleasant little morning room, whose French windows gave upon a shady terrace. Before the meal had proceeded very far, Virginia was quite ready to indorse her father's belief in the genuineness and good faith of their host. He was a man, indeed, whom it would have been hard to disbelieve. His manners were affable, unaffected, charming. He was precisely what a man of Christopher Morton's wealth, position, and long knowledge of the world could be expected to be—unassuming, and yet, in a subtle way, authoritative.

As the doctor had prophesied, he explained almost at once how he had learned of their presence in Mettray. "The old woman who lives in my lodge down at the gate told me of your call as soon as I had arrived last night. She is an excellent old creature and very faithful, though she is cursed, I fear, with a thoroughly worthless son. Well, as I had already dined, I turned about, then and there, and drove back to Tours to look you up, having no doubt at all that I should find you

at the Hôtel de l'Univers. When I discovered that you weren't there, I came out, a little at a loss, and stood still beside the curb for a moment, meditating where I should try next. While I stood there, I heard a conversation between two cabmen, one of whom was expatiating upon his luck and showing a couple of gold pieces to the other. He said he had got them for driving a party to la Mesle and then to Mettray. At that I, of course, pricked up my ears. A question or two, accompanied by as many francs, gave me the rest of the story complete, and satisfied me that I had really found you."

The explanation satisfied Mr. Heatherfield thoroughly, and almost carried conviction to Virginia herself. The only thing she did not like about it was the somewhat gratuitous reference to the worthlessness of the wall-eyed lodge keeper. The last of her misgivings, however, disappeared when their host brought the conversation around to the man he called his father.

The late Christopher Morton, who had been, as their note of invitation stated, one of Mr. Heatherfield's most valued friends, was, in his lifetime, a most interesting and peculiar character. Their host began talking about him now with an intimacy of understanding which could hardly have been possible to anyone but a son. He told

stories about him; spoke of his early struggles; of the qualities that had brought him his enormous success. He recalled periods of his life which Mr. Heatherfield himself could remember, and mentioned even some incidents in which Mr. Heatherfield had been concerned. He seemed to like to dwell upon the subject, and even when it changed, reintroduced it.

In the light of all he said, any idea that he was an impostor—that he was a mere tool of Alexander Duggleby—that he sat here in this chateau in a place to which he had no right—any such ideas as those must seem not only improbable but absolutely grotesque.

By the time when the arrival of the coffee marked the conclusion of the meal, Virginia was assured that they had found the man they sought; as sure that their mission to him was to have a successful termination, as her father was. She told me afterwards that she blushed every time she thought of our elaborate precautions for safeguarding the true formula, and of the presence of the imitation one in the oiled-silk bag which was hanging from about her father's neck.

Up to this moment nothing whatever had been said about the formula, nor of the attempt the Dugglebys had made to steal it. But when she had finished her coffee, her father turned to her:

" My dear," he said, " there is a matter of business which I want to talk over with Mr. Morton. It needn't take very long, I think. You will probably find that big white peacock out there on the lawn entertaining enough to keep you until we join you there."

Once more, for just a moment, she experienced a feeling of misgiving, but she conquered it at once. She knew her father well enough to feel sure that her presence in the room would embarrass him and make it difficult for him to tell Morton the story of his wrongs. Perhaps the thing that made it easiest for her to go was the apparent fact that Morton seemed not in the least anxious that she should. He went to the length of making a tentative suggestion that she might remain. That satisfied her completely.

She allowed him to conduct her out through one of the French windows and across the terrace to the lawn. He was very gallant, and earnestly promised that they would join her with as little delay as possible.

It was about two hours later that they did come out after her. She saw at once, by her father's face, that something had gone wrong, but did not know what it was till they were in their carriage driving back to Tours again, where they had arranged to meet us at the hotel.

What had happened was this: Mr. Heatherfield, as soon as the man called Morton had returned to the room, after escorting Virginia out of it, began to tell him the story of his discovery and of his subsequent dealings with the Dugglebys. The recital took a good while and Morton listened throughout with every appearance of interest. Before Mr. Heatherfield could finish his account, however, he was surprised, and rather annoyed, to find himself becoming sleepy. He had long been in the habit of taking a nap after lunch, and did not at first think of attributing this feeling to foul play on the part of his host.

Morton, with what, but for the sequel, would have passed for the most delicate tact, when he saw signs of Mr. Heatherfield's sleepiness, took the burden of the conversation upon himself, and began to speak of his own ignorance of the business, and his slight acquaintance either with the elder Duggleby or his son.

His low, smooth monotone as he talked along was the last thing Mr. Heatherfield could remember, until he became aware of a twitch at his coat. He had then, apparently, been heavily asleep, but not, he thought, for a very long time. Even now, he was only half awake, and in a very curious way at that. His mind resumed its normal waking activities and his ears were alert for every

sound that took place in the room. But a feeling as of a heavy weight upon his eyelids prevented his opening them, and an intense lassitude all over his body kept him lying back in his chair in the attitude of a man still profoundly asleep, without either the power or the inclination to stir himself.

When the doctor heard the story afterwards, he stated that, in all probability, the drug which had been administered which caused Mr. Heatherfield to go to sleep was chloral. The motor tract of the spinal cord is much more sensitive to this particular drug than is the sensatory tract. That was the drug they would most naturally have used, anyway, as its ordinary effect is most nearly that of natural slumber; which was what the conspirators wanted. It was to their own interest, if possible, to get Mr. Heatherfield away without his suspecting that anything had gone wrong.

After the twitch at his coat had roused him, Mr. Heatherfield next became aware of a current of cool air upon his chest. Evidently his coat, his collar, and his shirt had been unbuttoned. He might have supposed he had fainted and that the disorder in his dress was the result of an attempt to revive him, but at the same moment he heard a voice speaking softly, from some little distance away.

"Well," it asked, "have you got it?" He

recognized the voice instantly as belonging to young Alexander Duggleby.

By that time Mr. Heatherfield was able to open his eyes a little, not fully, but enough to make out a form bending over him, and to recognize that form as belonging to the man who called himself Morton. Apparently the other voice had come as a surprise to him, for he started at the sound of it. But he straightened up, and replied in a whisper:

"Yes, I have it. Here it is."

Duggleby came nearer, reached across Mr. Heatherfield's recumbent body and took in his hand the sealed envelope which Morton was holding out to him. Then, in spite of Morton's quick gesture of protest, he tore it open and drew out its contents.

"You will waken him," said Morton uneasily.

"Not after he's had two cups of that coffee," Duggleby replied, coolly enough, unfolding the papers as he spoke. "Even if he does wake up, he'll know enough to lie still and pretend that he isn't."

Morton, however, showed himself to be extremely uneasy, edged away a little from Mr. Heatherfield, and kept casting quick little glances out of the French window.

Suddenly, to Mr. Heatherfield's intense sur-

prise, and equally to his alarm, Duggleby strode swiftly across to his accomplice and thrust the papers in his face. "Give me the real formula," he demanded in a voice which, though not loud, was concentrated with passion.

"I don't know what you mean," said Morton. "For Heaven's sake! don't make a noise. That's the real formula; at least it's what I took from Heatherfield."

"You liar!" Duggleby whispered. And with that he caught him around the throat with both hands and shook him as a dog shakes a rat. The man turned perfectly limp and fell, groveling, at his feet; crawled away a little, and finally sat up, feeling of his throat.

"I don't know what you mean," he protested.

"Yes, you do," said Duggleby. "It was a rather bright idea of yours, if you had only had sense enough to execute it decently. You thought if you had the foresight to prepare a formula of your own to amuse me with, you could keep the real formula for yourself and dictate terms to me when you got away to a safe distance. I should really begin to respect you if you had had sense enough to execute it decently. The next time you try to play a trick like that, don't offer a chemist a formula that wouldn't deceive a schoolboy."

His rage seemed to be rapidly passing. "Come,

get up," he said. "Give me the real papers. It was a clever idea—clever enough to forgive."

Mr. Heatherfield had witnessed this scene in constantly growing alarm. He was amazed at Duggleby's shrewdness in detecting the fraudulent nature of the formulæ, for he had prepared them with great care, and had felt perfectly confident that they would deceive even an expert. He could not foresee exactly what would happen to him when Duggleby should become convinced that Morton was telling the truth, but he was, plainly enough, in serious danger. The next moment his astonishment increased tenfold, and his alarm ceased at the same time.

For Morton confessed.

He rose clumsily to his feet, fumbled in his pocket and drew out an envelope, which Mr. Heatherfield was now able to recognize as the one he himself had brought to the chateau in the oiled-silk bag.

"When a man's in as deep a hole as you've got me in," he murmured resentfully, "you can't much wonder that he tries to wriggle out."

"Well, don't wriggle any more," said Duggleby rather grimly. "Here, let's see that you're not lying to me this time."

He took Mr. Heatherfield's envelope from Morton's hand, opened it and cast a single glance

at its contents, and then quickly placed it in his pocket.

"That's more like," he said. "Now take the others—your silly sulphuric acid and common salt—and put them in Heatherfield's bag. There is no use in confessing that we are the people who robbed him, though he'll probably suspect it."

He left the room then, apparently, for Morton, unassisted, carried out his instructions, putting the old gentleman's clothing to rights as best he could, with hands that were clumsy with eagerness and haste. Then he went away to the French window to wait till the effect of the drug should have passed off.

When Mr. Heatherfield roused, he did his best to apologize for his nap and to affect total ignorance of all that had passed in the meantime. But he was in a hurry to get away, and Morton was not eager to detain him. A few minutes later they joined Virginia on the lawn.

On the way home she heard her father's story.

What happened when they reached the hotel shall be told a little later.

CHAPTER XXIV

WHAT DR. LINOL TOLD ME

FOR a moment the doctor and I stood perfectly speechless with astonishment before the corpulent clerical gentleman who had just called me "Christopher," and spoken of me as "Mr. Morton." A long, searching look into his face brought me absolutely nothing in the way of recognition; yet I knew that unless this stranger had made an almost inconceivable mistake, he must be among the most intimate of my friends. The use of the Christian name as a term of address implies much greater familiarity in France than in England or America.

It would be absolutely brutal to confess to this man that I did not know him. To avoid this, I told what I am pretty sure was a lie.

"You have met M. de Villiers before, I think," said I, bowing with the air of one who performs a superfluous introduction.

The doctor, who realized my predicament, did not deny an already existing acquaintance. Luck-

ily for us, the stranger was a man of garrulous habit, and his ready flow of speech prevented the conversation from getting stranded right from the start.

"Your friends here had about given you up," he said. "When we first heard that you had returned to Europe after your big-game hunt in West Africa, we entertained an almost daily expectation of seeing you here at Tours, but as months went by and we heard nothing from you—heard nothing of you except what was current in the newspapers—we began to think that you had, indeed, abandoned us."

"Believe me," said I, "I took my first opportunity to come back."

He smiled with a pleasant sort of skepticism. "Well," he said, "don't hurry away again till you have given your friends a chance to see something of you and to hear your budget of news."

The cadence of his voice suggested that he was about to take leave of us, and that I was determined to prevent. "We are at the hotel for the present," said I. "Won't you come back there now and lunch with us?"

My words seemed to surprise him a little, but he accepted the invitation very promptly.

We started up the street together, three abreast. Before we had gone a hundred paces I became

aware that we were creating a mild sensation, and that I was evidently the cause of it. The people turned about as we passed, looked after us, pointing me out when they thought I was not looking. Dozens of people were bowing to me—sleek-looking men of affairs, tradesmen from their shop doors, and one extremely pretty woman who was driving in a victoria. Her bow suggested that if I had checked my pace ever so little, her coachman would have received instructions to pull up to the curb. There could be no doubt at all that I was, or was mistaken for, a local celebrity of considerable importance. It was not altogether the absence of my beard that made the difference. The presence of my new companion put the recognition of me beyond a doubt.

Important as all these facts were, however—much as they would have interested me in ordinary circumstances—they were now relegated to the background of my thought. My unknown friend's conversation left me very little leisure to speculate upon other things.

"I heard this morning," he said as we strolled along, "that your cousin, Mr. Arthur Morton, had arrived in Tours." He spoke rather hesitatingly, as if hardly knowing whether he were introducing a theme that would be welcome or not. Neither the doctor nor I made any comment. And

presently he continued: "I should have expected his presence here to act as a deterrent to your own return rather than as an incentive to it, but possibly you did not know he had come."

"No," said I, "I knew nothing of it."

Then the doctor spoke. His contribution to the talk surprised me. "Mr. Arthur Morton bears a rather striking resemblance to our friend here, does he not?" he remarked.

"I am afraid it must be admitted that he does," said our new friend reluctantly, "although I myself have never been able to see it. I suppose, however, long acquaintance with both of them is what prevents me. There must, however, be a family likeness, because strangers are repeatedly mistaking one for the other."

We were at that moment crossing the square in front of the Hôtel de l'Univers, and at the risk of being run down by a casual cab, the doctor stopped short and looked our new acquaintance squarely in the face. "You are perfectly satisfied, are you, monsieur," he asked, "that that resemblance is not now misleading you? You are quite sure you are talking to Mr. Christopher Morton and not, in fact, to his cousin, Mr. Arthur?"

The clergyman returned his look with a stare of the blankest astonishment. "Can it be possible that you are serious, monsieur?" he asked.

"I never was more serious in my life. It is a matter of enormous importance."

"I am perfectly ready," said the stranger, speaking rather formally and stiffly, and with the air of choosing his words, "I am perfectly willing to take my oath, upon the name of God, that this young man, upon whose shoulder my hand rests, is Christopher Morton, and none other. The resemblance between himself and his cousin could never confuse a friend—hardly an acquaintance of any standing. And if I needed further proof, which I do not, my recollection of the day when he received the wound that left that white scar upon his chin would settle the matter beyond cavil."

He paused a moment there, and his look of astonishment deepened. "But this is childish," he continued. "Certainly you cannot doubt the word of our friend himself that he is Christopher Morton."

"My friend," said the doctor soberly, "is unable to give me his word. He does not know who he is. Come, let us go into the hotel. This is too serious a matter for the curbstone."

We secured a little private dining room in the hotel, and I suppose we ordered luncheon and went through the motions of eating it. At any rate, we must have remained at the table for hours

after all pretense of eating lunch had been abandoned, for it was late in the afternoon when, at last, we pushed back our chairs and looked at each other in blank silence.

Our new friend had done most of the talking. He proved to be, as I had surmised, the pastor of the Protestant church of Tours, by name and title Dr. Etienne Linol. He had, it seemed, for many years resided at la Mesle in the capacity of tutor to the boy Christopher Morton.

His conviction that I was that boy remained completely unshaken all the afternoon. He spoke of him, when addressing me, always as "you." "But you certainly remember how you—" he would begin, again and again, prefacing the account of some new event, sometimes important, sometimes trivial; and with each new beginning he would always be just as confident that this time he was going to strike the chord of memory within me.

He was telling me the life history of a mildly interesting and decidedly likable young man. He insisted that that young man was I, and, so far as such a thing could be proved, he proved it. And yet, all the while, the inner thing that *was* I, that was the only *I* there could be, looked on as a stranger.

There is no need of retelling here the circum-

stantial biography he gave us. In very broad outline, here is the life and character of the young man he believed me to be:

His mother was a Frenchwoman, intensely French, capable of being happy nowhere but in France. So here in France, at Château la Mesle, which was hers by inheritance, she had lived, while her husband had been living and working and piling up his colossal fortune in America. There was no ill feeling between them. He had spent his brief vacations with her until the time of her death.

The boy, who was their only child, she had appropriated for her own. She had given him a good education, in a way, though hardly one to fit him for the responsibilities that would come to him upon his father's death. He had grown up a rather typical French aristocrat of the better sort, fond of sports and games, a good boxer, fencer, and horseman. The only thing that he carried to excess, from the point of view of his friends, was his passion for music. He was a better pianist than a gentleman had any right to be.

His cousin Arthur had started out in life side by side with him; had shared Dr. Linol's tutelage at the chateau, but before he was fairly out of his boyhood he had developed all of the well-marked characteristics of the black sheep. Finally he

drifted away altogether, coming back only when in trouble, and only staying until he had persuaded Christopher and his mother to satisfy his needs.

This was the story Dr. Linol told, dropping his eager narrative in one place where it had failed, only to pick it up in another that seemed to him to promise more success. So far as the facts went, they tallied absolutely with what data the doctor and I had got together about myself.

Christopher Morton had left Tours about three years ago. He had appeared for the last time at a hunt-club dinner on the eve of his departure for West Africa to hunt big game, a project which his friends knew he had been preparing for for several months. Nothing was heard of him at all for nearly two years, at the end of which time the newspapers simultaneously reported his father's death and his inheritance of the entire fortune, and then began recording his appearance at various resorts of frivolity in different corners of Europe. So far as I knew, there was no particular significance about these dates, but M. de Villiers evidently saw more in them than I did.

As I said, at last we all fell silent. During all those hours we had spent there I had listened, at first with hope but later with the apathy of complete despair. It was not only that my old tutor's words called back nothing of the past to

me, that failure would have been merely one of those negative disappointments to which I was becoming hardened, but in telling me this story, he had built up a character antipodally different, utterly irreconcilable, it seemed to me, with the man Virginia knew me to have been. Neither Virginia nor Dr. Linol could possibly be mistaken regarding my physical identity. They had known two men who had no trait in common, and no sympathy or interest in common; and here I sat, possessing the body and mind that had once served the uses of those two men.

While I was too numb, too completely dazed with bewilderment to feel the full tragedy and horror of it then, I did realize, wearily, that some return, some acknowledgment, was due to Dr. Linol for his kindness. It was I who finally broke the silence, and it was to him I spoke.

"I think you have proved," said I, "that I once was Christopher Morton. That there could be any other explanation of the facts we have heard, seems almost inconceivable; at any rate, I have no doubt of it. I once was Christopher Morton. But as certainly as that is true, it is equally certain that I am not he now. I have been listening for hours to the life history of a total stranger. You have been very kind to me, and I thank you, thank you more warmly than I can express at this mo-

ment, for the eagerness you have shown to be of assistance to me. You have offered me my past, or by far the greater part of it, complete in every detail, but I cannot open my hands to receive it."

I did not look at my doctor. I felt in that moment that I could not support his eye. I knew that he understood, as fully as I could, the tragic inference which Dr. Linol's words had made unescapable.

The clergyman would have said something sympathetic, would have condoled with me upon my misfortune. I saw him trying to think of words of comfort and of hope. But the other man knew me better.

"What Dr. Linol has told us just now," he said quietly, "has been of inestimable assistance to us, in one way; a way which you, my young friend, have, I think, for the moment forgotten. Mr. Heatherfield and his daughter are almost as vitally concerned in this story which we have just heard as you are yourself. His explanation has made it perfectly clear that the rascal who invited them to Château la Mesle to-day was Arthur Morton, and not Christopher. Whether you feel that you can assume that name or not, it is clearly your duty to society to strip him of it. And you can strip the Dugglebys, father and son, of the power they have usurped."

CHAPTER XXV

VIRGINIA

HIS words were instantly efficacious in rousing me from my apathy. The invitation which had taken Mr. Heatherfield and Virginia to la Mesle was a lure, and there could be no doubt, now, that it had been a lure of Duggleby's contriving. The thought of their danger brought me at once to my feet.

Our arrangements had been that they were to return from la Mesle to this hotel and meet us here some time in the afternoon. The first thing to find out was, whether they had, in fact, returned.

With a word of excuse to M. de Villiers and the clergyman, I hurried downstairs and sought the *concierge*. I learned from him, to my intense relief, that Virginia and her father had been back more than an hour. The old gentleman had seemed greatly fatigued and excited, the *concierge* said, and his daughter had engaged rooms for both of them. They had inquired as to the whereabouts of M. de Villiers and myself, but, learn-

ing that we were engaged with a stranger, had given orders that we were not to be interrupted.

Two minutes later I was knocking on Virginia's door. She opened it almost instantly and without a question.

"You see," she commented rather breathlessly, "I haven't forgotten your step, and—well, I knew you would come to me as soon as you could." Then, with a little gesture which called my attention to the condition of the room, she added: "You don't mind, do you? I've been shopping. I had to replace some of the contents of my hand bag."

There was a litter of packages and wrapping paper on the bed and on the floor. Some of the packages had been opened, and, as a result, Virginia herself, instead of being clad in the trim severity which had characterized her before, was wrapped now, from her white neck to the pompons on her soft red slippers, in a long kimono of flowered silk.

Her apology was clearly intended only to cover the condition of the room. The informality of her own appearance left her untroubled.

She closed the door behind me; then with both hands brushed her hair back out of her eyes. There was something delicious, luxurious about the gesture, and she concluded it by stretching

those two white arms out toward me and resting her hands upon my shoulders.

"We've had all sorts of exciting adventures, Morton," she said; "but the sight of you here, alone with me again, makes it hard to begin."

Then she drew me a little closer.

"You look more natural, somehow. Something's happened. What have you done? Oh, you've shaved off your beard."

She interrupted herself to laugh, and moved a little nearer yet, and lay her cheek against mine.

"I like you better this way," she concluded.

Then she slipped her hand into mine and led me across the room.

"Sit down beside me on the sofa, here," she said, "and let's talk. I suppose I must tell you the tale of our adventures."

The sweetness of her, the frank simplicity which went along with this complete self-surrender, was poignant enough to turn me a little bit giddy. From her point of view I was her husband, and it was clear enough that no words of mine could make me seem anything else to her. And yet, from my point of view, except that I loved her, I was almost a stranger to her. I had seen her once, for a few moments, in New York, in an electric cab with Duggleby, from which she had dismounted at the Brooklyn Bridge terminal. For another few mo-

ments I had seen her, and had spoken half a dozen words to her on shipboard. Except for those two meetings, my whole acquaintance with her, all my conscious memories of her, dated no farther back than yesterday.

And, curiously and paradoxically enough, my unconscious memories, my dream pictures of her were growing fainter every hour, just in proportion as her vivid, present personality etched itself more deeply in my present consciousness.

I dropped down beside her on the sofa, in the rending grip of violently conflicting emotions. A savage, relentless instinct in me told me that I was violating her confidence and privacy by being there alone with her on those terms; that I had no right, no more right than a mere masquerading impostor would have, to take this gift which she so frankly offered me. And yet I longed for it, with a longing that fairly hurt. I was tired, disheartened, at the end of my hopes, and I had a tired child's impulse to seek asylum in her arms and slacken for a while my grip upon the world. And I knew how eagerly those arms would grasp me into that haven.

I bent forward and buried my face in my hands.

"You've news, too," she said with a sudden flash of intuition. "Something has happened to you. Something has happened to you here in

Tours to-day. It's not bad news, is it? It can't be very bad news—can it, Morton, dear?"

"Virginia," said I, looking up at her suddenly, "do you remember the old story of the man who had no shadow? Well, that story has come true now, and it is my own. I'm as unsubstantial as a ghost. You think that I am the man you knew and loved and married, a man you learned to love for his humanity, for the love which he, in turn, bore his neighbors, a man who worked his life out for them. And it's true that that man lived in my body, and thought, to some extent, with my mind. But in spite of that, do you know what has happened to me to-day, here in the streets of Tours? I have seen dozens of people lifting thir hats to me, welcoming me back; I have been identified by a man, who knew Christopher Morton intimately for years, as Christopher Morton himself."

"Christopher Morton—" she repeated wonderingly. "But that's impossible!"

"No," said I. "So far as such a case can be, that case is proved. And yet, all he told me of the life which must once have been my own has not kindled one spark of recognition in my own mind. What good will it do to prove, by inference and deduction and documents, who the man was who was lost—Christopher Morton or Morton Smith?

That won't give him back to me. That can't give me back the only thing that makes a man himself. Though I prove it a thousand times, I shall always be unreal, a man without a shadow."

She had drawn a little away from me when I had spoken of Christopher Morton, startled, half frightened, and gazed at me, wide eyed, as a child might gaze at a stranger whose hand he had confidingly taken, thinking it to be his father's.

But as I finished speaking, with a sudden rush of tears, she came close to me again, slipped her arm around my neck, pulled my head down and cradled it where it so longed to be.

"I won't have you tortured any more," she cried, half fiercely. "I won't have you submitted to any more experiments. Do you think I would let a mere trick of memory take you away from me now that I know you're *you*—take you away, or even threaten to?" Then her voice dropped to a whisper. "*I* know you. I know who you are and what you are, and that's enough. I know your hair, your eyes, and every line about them, only some are deeper than they were. I know your hands and every gesture you make with them. I know your step, your voice."

"Dr. Linol knew them, too."

She laughed softly at that. "Not the way I do —not the way I do," she repeated.

"There was something positively magnetic about her hands."

"Yet he was right; he is right, just as much as you are."

"Listen!" she commanded. "What if he is, or, rather, what if you believe he is? What if you can't help believing that once you were Christopher Morton, and that at another time you were Morton Smith? Let the whole past go together and stop worrying. It will come back some day. Meanwhile, you are somebody now. You cast a shadow yourself — Monsieur Barras — Monsieur Barras whom I've known only two days."

Her face was full of laughing mockery as she said those last words and she pointed the absurdity she had pictured by bending down suddenly and kissing me.

The answer to her sweet fallacy was altogether too clear. I had no guarantee that Simon Barras would be more permanent than his two predecessors. He might revert to either one of them, or to another man completely, if the horrible theory which explained my mystery should prove true.

But I could not answer her while I lay there in her arms. I only drew a long breath and lay still.

After a little silence, she asked: "Don't you want to hear what happened to us at the chateau to-day?"

I think she began the narrative more for the purpose of diverting my own thoughts from the circle

in which they spun than from any very present interest of her own in it, for she talked rather absently.

As for me, while I heard, it could hardly be said that I listened, though, as it was afterwards proved, I remembered.

After she had finished, there was a silence between us. Finally, bending down over me she met my eyes.

"I hoped that I had talked you to sleep," she said. "I am going to put you to sleep now, and then it will be time for me to dress and go down to dinner. You're not to go. You've seen enough of people for one day, and I'd rather like to talk with your Dr. Linol myself."

She rose from her place on the sofa and, with gentle compulsion, made me lie out flat upon it. And then, crouching near, she began stroking my forehead and temples with a light, rhythmic touch. There was something positively magnetic about her hands, and in spite of my expressed incredulity as to her powers, she actually did as she prophesied.

The quiet closing of the door after her as she left the room to go down to dinner was what wakened me.

CHAPTER XXVI

MY LAST EXPERIMENT

FOR an hour after I was roused by the faint click of that closing door behind Virginia I lay quite still there on the couch where she had left me. It is no exaggeration to say that, for the length of that interminable hour, I suffered the tortures of the very damned. The most excruciating physical pain to which I could have subjected myself would have been a pleasant relief from the agony of my thoughts.

The quest I had set out upon a month ago, actuated by the fond belief that there was a man somewhere who had a right to call himself I; the quest which had so grotesquely terminated to-day with the discovery that I was not one man, but apparently two, that was hardly in my thoughts at all. Not directly in my thoughts, I mean. The events of that month and the conclusion they had led me to formed a somber background to the one incandescent fact which tortured me.

That fact was, that before long now, in another

hour, perhaps, or less than that, Virginia would be coming back, back to this room of hers, whose privacy I had violated, back to a man who loved her, and yet barely knew her, a man she believed to be her husband.

I tried to wonder what that man had been like. The notion I had of him, from the meager accounts she had given me, made him out a rather austere figure; a sort of St. Francis of modern industry; the sort of man that most of us nowadays, even I—well, Simon Barras, then—would call a fanatic. He chilled me a little, repelled me, that man who had once been I, the man Virginia loved. I felt that if Simon Barras were to succeed in reconciling himself with either of those two men who had preceded him in the tenancy of this body and mind, it would be with the French aristocrat more nearly than with the American altruist. Christopher Morton had, at least, conducted himself very much as Simon Barras might have done had he ever been young and untrained, and spoiled by a too indulgent mother. But at the very mention of Christopher Morton's name, Virginia had shrunk a little.

And yet in an hour she was coming back to me. And when she came— In the sweet frankness of her innocence she had already tempted me clear to the edge of human endurance. The appeal of

those eyes of hers, of those warm red lips and white arms was one I could not hope to resist indefinitely. And yet to surrender, to yield to the sweet fallacy of her reasoning, would brand me in my own eyes, in the eyes of Simon Barras, as a vile and contemptible scoundrel.

I got to my feet at that, switched on the light, and stared at my shaven face in one of the mirrors. For aught I knew, I might be, to-morrow or next week, the sort of greedy villain who would take all that she, in her innocent bounty, was holding out to me. But now, to-night, I thanked God that I was a man, a gentleman. And to-night, in one way or another, I would solve my problems; would find an answer to my questions.

Silently, and with infinite precaution that none of my friends should become aware of my flight, I slipped from the room, stole down the corridor to an unused stairway, made my way to the street and sprang into a passing cab, whose driver responded to my signal. I did not speak one word to him, but pointed with my stick down the rue Nationale toward the bridge. I was on my way to try one last experiment, an experiment which, at least, had this advantage—that it would be conclusive.

Long before we reached the bridge I was surprised to find myself curiously calm. It may have been that the breath of the cool night air had some-

thing to do with this result, as also the fact that I, at last, was doing something, not merely thinking. But more than either, I think, was due to this, that such thoughts as I had been wrestling with during the past hour carry, in a measure, their own anodyne with them. For a man to try to realize a doubt about his own identity, to question his right to use the pronoun I, is very much such a mental exercise as trying to think in terms of a fourth dimension. The conception lies the other side of a fixed boundary which the human reason cannot cross.

As I settled back against the cushions of the cab, my tired mind reverted to the old conviction that I was I, and that in some way it must be possible for me to recover my lost self.

When I had succeeded in calming myself with that reflection, I was able to see some things which held out a promise of hope. Never since the moment when I cast that first glance at the man sitting at the other end of the bench in the yard at Dr. Berry's asylum had I been helped in any way by any facts which had been related concerning my lost past. Indeed, the use of my mind upon the problem—my present mind I mean—had always served to blunt and deaden the action of the only thing which had ever helped me—the thing which I must call my instinct.

Left to itself, that instinct had shown itself capable of important discoveries. It had taught me the trick of the foot by which I had overcome my guards in Dr. Berry's asylum. It had guided me through the maze of streets in east side New York. It had recognized Virginia. It had got me my job at Coney Island and secured for me the friendship of the French doctor. It had guided me to the Quai d'Orsay; had led me here to Tours; had conducted me through this city, without a moment's halt or hesitation, straight to the door of what I knew now had for many years been my home. But it could only work when my active, present mind suspended operations and gave it a clear field.

To-day I had been giving it no chance. It should not, after all, have made me despair that Dr. Linol's eager reminiscences had met with no response, nor even—though this was harder to realize—that I could have sat beside Virginia, my heart and soul thrilling with her mere presence there beside me, and yet without the responsive vibration of one single chord of memory. It was not in the eager appeal of friendly and loving voices that I should find the answer to my secret. But the thing that I was doing now, that offered a chance.

As a plan, it possessed the virtue of a perfectly

rudimentary simplicity. I was going home. That was all—home to Château la Mesle. I was going alone, unarmed, unprovided with any safeguard against attack, just as I might have gone three years ago after that last hunt-club dinner that Dr. Linol had told about.

The presence in the chateau of a man who had determined to murder me—who had made an attempt to murder me only that morning, and of a gang of rascals, who were his mere hirelings, on whom he could rely to do his bidding to the utmost—all of these facts played a very small part in my calculations. What part they did play was favorable to my plans, rather than otherwise. For I believed that necessity, danger, the peril, perhaps, of instant death might avail to bring back my past to me where milder measures had failed. I laid absolutely no plans to meet these dangers, took no precautions whatever against them. So far as possible I wiped my mind, clean as a schoolboy's slate, of all records of the past twenty-four hours—indeed, of all records whatever. I was going home. That was all.

It was a little surprising how easy of accomplishment this feat proved to be. Body and mind relaxed together. I leaned back against the cushions of my cab and lighted a cigarette, inhaling the fragrant smoke with lazy pleasure. My cab rolled

out between the stone parapets of the long white bridge.

Then, as I looked out along the silvered, sandy reaches of the Loire, illumined, and yet caressingly concealed by the veiled half moon and its shadows, there came to me a sense of repetition, very vague at first, but growing stronger every second. The moonlight, the fragrance of my cigarette, the hollow rhythm of the horse's hoofs—all played their perfect part in it.

Suddenly, without intention, without in the least understanding the thing I did, I ordered my driver to stop, dismounted from the cab, handed him a five-franc piece and told him to go back to Tours. The act was so completely against the intent with which I had set out, namely, of driving to the chateau, that, for just an instant, my mind resisted my unconscious impulse. But I thrust this hesitation from me almost passionately. It was the last act of resistance my mind made. From then on, my inner man had full control.

I walked to the parapet of the bridge and looked over. There were strange bits of driftwood floating down the submerged current of my thoughts. There was something about a man trying to jump into the river below me—a man not myself. There was something, curiously enough, about two thousand francs.

Presently, in obedience to an automatic impulse, I resumed my way on foot across the bridge, trudged steadily on up through the Tranché, and turned off to the left at the St. Symphorien post-office. I was following the road to Château la Mesle. But no thought of my destination was in my mind. It was occupied altogether with that faint, curious echo of something that once before had happened on that bridge on such a night as this. What the circumstance was I did not know, but it must have left me in a strange state of exultation, for that was the feeling I was conscious of now—conscious of some great resolve I had just taken—of some unworthy thing I had just renounced.

Swinging along the moonlit road, I felt the excitement of these emotions without being aware of their cause. Of any thoughts of Virginia and her father, of the French doctor, of Duggleby and his accomplice, my mind was absolutely clear. They were as if they had never been.

Presently I found myself turning off the road into a little bypath. The great gate which gave access to the park at la Mesle was still half a mile away down the road, but I felt no misgivings about turning aside. The instinct which had prompted me was absolutely authoritative.

The path was a mere track at first, between two

unfenced, cultivated fields. Presently it crossed a heavily wooded pasture. Here, under the trees, there was no light by which to make out the path, but my feet never faltered. I hardly checked my pace, and at last I found myself walking along beside a high stone wall. Twenty paces ahead of me was a gate, and at that gate I stopped.

I seemed to know somehow that the gate would not be locked; at any rate, I experienced no surprise when it swung open, with protesting creaks, upon my shooting the wooden bolt. I closed the gate after me, and set out briskly across the broad, wooded lawn. Right before me rose the dear, familiar outlines of Château la Mesle.

Evidently the creaking of the little gate had attracted somebody's attention, for a man came hurrying across the lawn to meet me. His air was rather menacing, but it did not occur to me to feel in the smallest degree alarmed, and, as it turned out, my confidence was justified. He came quite close, and looked into my face; then with a grumble of apology, touched his hat and walked away.

If my mind had been working, this action of his would have given me something to think about. My instinct, however, took the man's action absolutely for granted. Why should a guardian of my own grounds be expected to act in any other way at sight of me?

I turned presently into the path up which I had started to walk once before—could it be possible that it was only yesterday that the wall-eyed lodge keeper had turned me back?—the path that led to the little door under the low gray stone arch.

This door, like the gate, I found unlocked. I stepped within and closed it behind me. I was in total darkness, but not for a single instant did I hesitate. I walked forward a little way, found a familiar post with my outstretched hand, and began ascending a long spiral stair. At the head of it I found another door, which I opened and entered.

I explored the wall at my left, and six inches from the point where my hand had touched it, found a wall switch which I turned on, flooding the room instantly with light.

From the moment when I had dismissed the cab on the bridge, until the present moment, my instinctive mind had not committed a single error, and yet, at no instant of that time could I have predicted what my next move was to be. There was no expectation, when I turned into the bypath, of finding the gate; no expectation, when I entered the doorway, of finding the stairs. I had done everything as methodically and unconsciously as if it had been a part of my daily routine for the past three years.

But with the turning on of the light there came a change. I was no longer calm; no longer matter-of-fact. The very first sight of the outlines of that room, of its heavy-beamed ceiling, of the tapestries on the walls, of the deep-embrasured windows, the articles of furniture, the first glance at all that brought me a feeling of buoyant delight that almost overwhelmed me. I was home! home! home after a long pilgrimage!

I laid aside my hat and stick and dropped rather limply into a big easy chair. I think I must have sat there for more than half an hour, my mind all the while in a perfectly passive state, satisfied simply with a sensation of rest and of homecoming.

At last, however, I rose and crossed the room to a small door at the other side of it. I wanted my dressing gown and slippers and I knew, in advance this time, that this was the place to go for them. Here, for the first time, I was wrong. My expectation, at least, was disappointed. The room had been a wardrobe once, but it was now empty except for a couple of large packing boxes.

I turned away with a slight feeling of bewilderment, crossed my broad sitting room once more, and halted before a small cellaret. Here again I knew in advance what I wanted, and here again I was disappointed. Whatever the thing might

contain it was locked, and a search of my pockets, of course, failed to produce a key.

It shows how strong, how perfectly complete in fact, the dominance of the instinctive Christopher Morton was, when I point out that these two failures did not at all serve to throw me back into the personality of Simon Barras. My present man, if such I may call him, was as completely submerged as ever my lost man had been.

My next act was to stride impatiently over to the bell, which was in the wall not far from the fireplace, and ring. I expected an immediate answer, but did not get it. In a very few seconds I rang again, and this time louder. At last I heard footsteps approaching down the corridor. The door opened a little way and a strange face peered in at me.

"What are you doing here?" I asked. "Where is Lauth?"

"Who?" said the man at the door. His manner certainly was not that of a well-trained servant.

"My valet—Lauth," I answered. "Why doesn't he answer the bell?"

The man stared at me for a moment, then closed the door with a bang, and I heard him hurrying away down the corridor.

Of what followed in the next half hour it is not easy to give a perfectly intelligible description.

I was really two men—Christopher Morton and Simon Barras, and you will remember that these two men were almost total strangers to each other. To Morton, at least, Barras was a total stranger. In the first few minutes of the scene that followed sometimes one had possession of my voice, and sometimes the other.

When I heard steps returning along the corridor, when I heard a knock at the door, and a voice asking, "Are you in there, Morton?" it must have been Christopher Morton who answered, automatically, "Yes, of course. Come in." It must have been Christopher Morton who looked, unmoved, except for a slight feeling of disdainful surprise, into the face of his visitor. That visitor was Alexander Duggleby. He said:

"What the devil is the matter with you? Have you gone out of your head?"—started to say it, at any rate, but the sentence died unfinished upon a pair of pallid lips. He shut the door after him quickly and leaned back against it.

I did not understand at the time the reason why the sight of me there in my room should affect him so strangely, but in the light of after events it was clear enough.

I had shaved off my beard since he had seen me in the morning, and by doing so had accentuated my likeness to my cousin Arthur—the likeness

which had deceived both the man I had met in the park and the man who answered my bell. This latter rascal had gone to Duggleby and told him that Mr. Morton (meaning Arthur, of course) was up in the tower room, and apparently out of his head. Duggleby had, indeed, addressed me under the impression that I was Arthur. It took the second look to reveal to him his mistake.

"I didn't know," said I quietly and rather contemptuously, "that I enjoyed the honor of having you for a guest here at la Mesle."

At that I saw the light come back into his face. His brows drew together ominously.

Something about his expression brought me back momentarily into the present. I passed my hand confusedly over my eyes, and for an instant groped to find myself.

"I was mistaken," I continued. "I believe I was aware that you used my father's house to-day as a trap for one of his old friends. It was in my morning room, I believe, that you picked Mr. Heatherfield's pocket."

Duggleby smiled. "You think you are aware of it? Well, luckily for you I have got something to bargain with. This morning I hadn't. This morning I'd have been glad of a chance to kill you." He was smiling now, in open derision. "Possibly you suspected as much. But now, luck-

ily for you, I can drive a bargain. I couldn't the last time you and I discussed your father-in-law's affairs. You were very moral and very high-handed. You were going to do a great many things."

He would have gone on, but I interrupted him, and in doing so I committed an indiscretion which might well have cost me my life. It resulted from a curious confusion between my two persons. The events of the day were perfectly clear in my mind —his attempt to assassinate me in the road that morning—the conference between Virginia, the doctor, and me concerning the wisdom of accepting the invitation of the man who pretended to be Christopher Morton—the precautions we had taken to avoid the very trap which was laid for Mr. Heatherfield—the account of their adventures at the chateau—that, I say, was as clear to me as if I had been Simon Barras and no one else.

Yet, in spite of all that, as I stood there, facing my angry, dangerous enemy, I was Christopher Morton. My feelings were those of a man standing on his own hearthstone, surrounded by his own friends and servants. And, in consequence of the strength of that feeling, I interrupted him to tear away the only real defense I had against his violence.

"You need not trouble to state the terms of

your bargain," said I, "because there is no bargain you could make. You picked a man's pocket this afternoon, and what you got was a little fictitious document which had been prepared in anticipation of the very attempt you made."

He laughed. "You knew about Morton's trick, did you? Well, I saw through it. It failed to work."

"Yes," said I, "you saw through Morton's trick, but not through Mr. Heatherfield's. There was no common salt and sulphuric acid in Mr. Heatherfield's formula, but, for all that, it was just exactly as valuable as Morton's, and not one bit more."

His face went perfectly black at that. "I know you are telling me the truth," he said, "but whether you are a lunatic or only a fool, I don't know. Perhaps you are a sensible man looking for an easy way to commit suicide, for I swear to you you shall never leave this room alive."

"Don't be theatrical," I said sharply. "You've had two chances to assassinate me and have failed twice, but this isn't exactly the place to make the third attempt."

As I spoke, I reached out my hand and pressed the button. Until I heard the sound of the bell ringing, my delusion was complete. I as fully expected that it would be instantly answered by one

of my former servants, as that my own hand would obey my will. But, with the sound of the bell itself, the delusion, somehow, fell away from me—fell away instantly. I was standing with my logical feet squarely on the ground, with the complete realization of the acute peril into which I had plunged.

And I was looking down the barrel of Alexander Duggleby's revolver.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE SECRET CHAMBER

THE bell I had rung was answered instantly. So far my expectation was verified. But it was no servant of mine who stood there in the doorway. It was the wall-eyed lodge keeper. Duggleby summoned him into the room, and bade him close the door after him, still keeping me covered with his revolver.

"Go over and search him," he commanded, "and see if he is armed."

The man did his bidding, swiftly, expertly, but without unnecessary roughness. The result of his search produced nothing more formidable than a pocketknife.

The position to which I had moved in order to ring the bell was in an angle formed by the great chimney; a solid oak wainscoting, shoulder high, behind me and no window within ten paces. To express my situation with literal accuracy, I was cornered.

"Now," said Duggleby, when the man had fin-

ished searching me, "move that table across in front of him, corner ways. Do you understand?" His French was rudimentary, but his pantomime was expressive.

The man swung the heavy table around, and I was penned into my corner a little more effectually than before. The man then turned to Duggleby for further instructions.

"Go and find Mr. Morton," said my captor curtly, "and tell him to come here at once."

The man replied with an expression not to be found in the lexicons, and Duggleby looked puzzled. "He says," I translated, "that the man you call Morton has skipped."

He looked at me thoughtfully, curiously, but evidently it did not occur to him to doubt the truth of what the man said, nor the accuracy of my translation.

There was a long minute of silence. My captor was looking neither at me nor at the villainous young man who was in his hire. It was to the latter that he finally spoke:

"That's all for the present," he said. "I'm not to be disturbed on any pretext. But go to the lodge, and if anyone tries to get in at the park gates, ring the house bell."

The man left the room without a word. Duggleby locked the door after him and tucked the

key in his pocket. "You understand, of course," he then said to me, "that if you try to get out of that corner I shall kill you instantly. I'm a good shot. It won't need but one."

I made no reply. The footsteps of the man who had searched me receded and became inaudible down the corridor.

So I and my enemy were left alone together. I might almost say that Duggleby was left alone, for he seemed hardly to count me as a living human person at all. The coolness, calmness, the recklessness which always seemed to characterize him before, somehow disappeared. His face looked gray; his eyes were somber with tragedy. He made me think, somehow, of Macbeth when, at the end of his futile career of slaughter, he sat waiting till Birnam Wood should move on Dunsinane. I was completely in his power. I felt perfectly sure that he meant to take my life. And yet my feeling toward him was not of loathing, nor anger, nor fear, but almost of pity.

For quite a while—I had no means of measuring the time, but probably not less than a quarter of an hour—he paced restlessly and moodily about the room. Finally I found him gazing at me meditatively, as if I had spoken aloud the thing that was in my mind.

"Yes," he said, "you are right about it.

You know I am going to kill you, but you are thinking that, after all, you had rather be in your shoes than in mine. And, as I say, you are right."

I can pretend to none of that supernatural courage of which I have sometimes read in books. With any possibility of action before me, with an even chance of escape, nay, with a chance of one in a hundred, provided that chance depended upon my own exertions, I think I could have faced death with fortitude.

But standing there, unarmed, penned in, waiting only for the moment that suited his pleasure, to be shot to death, I felt the chill and the nausea of crude terror assail me; I felt the sweat gather on my forehead and run down into my eyes. I struggled against it with the utmost power of my will. There was something indecent about a terror like that, I said to myself. I wanted to die like a man, not like a dog. Even the most degraded criminal, I reflected, walked out on the trap and submitted to the noose with a decent appearance of composure.

Strangely enough, while that agonized struggle was going on in my soul, I could hear my own voice talking. It was mine, undoubtedly, but it sounded remote, uncannily calm.

"That's an audacious assumption of yours," it

was saying quietly, in answer to Duggleby's last words. "Have you ever stood in the shoes of a man who was waiting to be murdered?"

"On the other hand," said Duggleby, "have you ever stood in the position of a man trying to get up his courage to commit a murder?"

"That suggests the one thing that I am really curious about," the voice that was not mine replied. "I can understand that, with affairs in the position they have reached to-night, there is nothing else that you can do. But what possible compulsion were you under at first? What incomprehensible force was it that drove you to try to kill me that night in your father's library?"

Strangely enough, I, myself, did not understand the question that I asked; did not know at all to what event it referred. The question asked itself, mechanically, somehow, out of the inward recesses of Christopher Morton's mind.

But Duggleby understood. He looked at me gravely. "I'd really like to tell you about that," he said, "but I'm afraid I haven't time. If that rascally cousin of yours hadn't given me the slip, I think I should have chanced it."

Mechanically the voice that I hardly recognized asked another question: "How long ago was that, by the way—that night, when, without warning, you flung yourself upon me?"

"About a year," he answered absently. "Do you mean to say you didn't know?"

He interrupted himself there and turned upon me furiously as he did so: "Damn you!" he cried. "Don't you suppose I know what you are doing? Trying to make me talk—asking me questions—taking up time. Well, time is up now. Do you understand that?"

"The decision apparently rests with you," said I.

"Listen," said he. "You are to turn your face to the wall, and I will count ten, slowly, at intervals, as nearly as I can guess, of a second. At the count of ten I shall fire, and—well, you needn't be uneasy about my marksmanship."

I reeled a little as I turned, for the old horror was coming over me again. To steady myself, I clutched at a narrow ledge which ran around the top of the wainscoting.

Something familiar about the touch of it led my fingers over the surface of its carvings, led them along, and presently arrested them. Duggleby by that time had counted three. One of my fingers pressed its way into a little hole in the carving over which it had stopped, and with that pressure the bit of wood yielded.

And then something happened!

With that tiny mechanical response to an old

familiar touch, my miracle—the miracle I had despaired of—was wrought.

Ever since I had stood by the bridge parapet, two hours ago, my past had been drifting down to me. But it had been fragmentary, illusive, inconsequent, and had confused, bewildered me, giving me the feeling of a man slipping in and out of a dream.

What happened now was different altogether. It was absolutely instantaneous. One moment it was not. The next it was complete. It was so simple, and yet so miraculous, as to leave me at a loss to describe it. All I can say is, that somehow, in that extreme moment, a long interrupted current flashed round its circuit again. The thing that makes a man himself, the knowledge that I was I, the vivid electric spark of identity shot across the poles of my consciousness. It was too quick for memories. I made no effort to remember; nay, like the traveler on the road to Damascus, in the illumination of that moment I was blinded by the excess of light. I was a man now; not a ghost. I saw my shadow.

And in the dazzling consciousness of that supreme fact I forgot the fear of death; forgot that Duggleby was counting there behind me.

Whether I should have let him count ten and

kill me without availing myself of the means of escape, or the good hope of it, at any rate, that was beneath my finger, I do not know. But in that very moment we heard the clanging of a great bell. Some one was at the park gates.

Duggleby had just counted six. "Don't be afraid," he said. "I promised you ten. You shall have it."

And then he counted seven. As he did so I pressed again, and this time harder, against the little spot in the carving that had yielded before.

Silently, screened from his view by my interposing body, a panel in the wainscoting began sliding backward. When it had opened wide enough to admit my body, I crouched suddenly and sprang through.

Duggleby fired, and fired quickly, but the big table, behind which he had had me penned, screened me and deflected the bullet.

He fired a second shot that grazed my shoulder, just as I was getting out of range, sideways. I shot the heavy panel back and from behind its protection I heard a moment later a third shot fired, but did not hear it strike.

Strangest of all, just as that third shot was fired, I thought I heard a man's voice cry out: "Thank God!" And the voice sounded like Duggleby's own.

I fear I must once more interrupt my narrative to tell what my friends had been doing since I had so unceremoniously taken French leave of them in the hotel. M. de Villiers and Virginia discovered my absence after I had been gone perhaps an hour. He already knew from her own lips something of what had passed between us. He understood, better than it was possible for her to do, the horrible inference which must result from the double yet diverse identification of myself which she and Dr. Linol had made. On discovering my flight, an instantaneous fear sprang up in him, which amounted almost to conviction, that I had left the hotel with the idea of destroying myself.

He said nothing of this fear to Virginia or her father, and he induced Dr. Linol, who had remained for dinner with them, to return to them and wait until he came back. He then went straight to the prefecture, where he communicated to the police the account of my disappearance, and had an organized search for me, or for my body, started at once. Telling his tale there consumed some little time, and when he returned to the hotel it was to find Virginia and Dr. Linol, together with no less a person than my cousin, Arthur Morton, on the point of setting out for the chateau.

It appears that the man who had met me on the lawn had mistaken me for my cousin. He had en-

countered Arthur himself not three minutes later, and the evening dress which Arthur wore convinced the man that he had made a mistake regarding my identity. This he confided to Arthur. Arthur's loyalty to Duggleby had been wavering all day, more especially since lunch time. Guessing that it was I who had come to the chateau, and convinced that if Duggleby encountered me there he would murder me in cold blood, he decided on the spot to take the most effective measure he could think of to avoid complicity in the deed.

He jumped on a horse which was already saddled and rode posthaste into Tours, intent on finding M. de Villiers, warning him of my danger, and making an appeal for mercy for himself. This intention being frustrated by the doctor's absence, he next asked for Virginia. Dr. Linol's presence in the room with her was, of course, completely unexpected and reduced him to a condition of downright servility. He would do anything; he would change sides; he would confess all he knew. What was more to the point, he would go with them to the chateau in the hope that they might not prove too late to save me from Duggleby.

Virginia, on her own responsibility, ordered out the doctor's car and positively insisted on accompanying the party. M. de Villiers, returning just

as they were about to set out, of course joined them.

Over the smooth, empty roads the car burned up the four or five miles between the hotel and the chateau in hardly more than as many minutes. They found the park gates open and came flying up the driveway with scarcely a pause. They were not aware until afterwards that anyone in the lodge had given the alarm as they passed.

When they reached the chateau it was to all appearances, and in fact, completely deserted except for the presence of myself, hidden behind the paneled door of the secret chamber, and Duggleby lying on the floor of my sitting room, dying from the effect of the third shot which I had heard and which he had fired into his own body. It was, perhaps, three or four minutes after Duggleby had fired that last shot when the doctor, his chauffeur, an absolutely faithful man, and my renegade cousin rushed into the room. Virginia had been left downstairs in the morning room under the protection of Dr. Linol.

Château la Mesle has no historic right to possess a secret chamber with a hidden door. It is comparatively modern, dating only from the days of the Empire, and the secret chamber had been built solely for my own amusement by my indulgent mother in my younger days, when visits to the

neighboring chateaux of Blois and Loches had set my brain afire with romantic enthusiasm. The construction of it had been conducted, under my own boyish superintendence, with the greatest secrecy. My cousin Arthur himself had never heard of its existence. I remember the days when we were building it as days of the most undiluted and most delirious happiness I had ever enjoyed.

It was a strange freak of chance that my mother's indulgence of this childish whim of mine should have been so directly instrumental not only in saving my life but in working the miracle without which my life would hardly have been worth saving.

The moment I slid the panel to behind me, with the echo of Duggleby's shots still ringing in my ears, I groped my way across the little room, which was built in the thickness of the walls, and found without difficulty the entrance to the tiny tunnel which provided the room with its other outlet. This tunnel led around behind the chimney, turned to the right and opened out into another paneled door, which had been the bedroom of my suite. Of course I knew perfectly well where I was going, but for all that I had to go slowly. I was a normal man again and my memory worked like a normal man's; there was no more of that preternatural swiftness and accuracy about it which had

characterized it so sharply when it was a mere subconscious instinct.

I turned into the corridor just in time to meet the doctor rushing rather wildly out of my sitting room in search of me. Following him came Arthur and the chauffeur carrying Duggleby in their arms to the nearest bedroom.

The doctor's expression when he caught sight of me was complex. There was joy in it and the most intense relief; and, yet, I could see there, too, a perfectly justifiable anger.

I took him by both shoulders. "I had to try this last experiment alone," said I. "If it had failed I should have welcomed the penalty of failure, for life was unendurable to me two hours ago. But it has succeeded. I am my own man again."

The sudden relaxation of his body under my hands told me to what a terrible strain that last experiment had subjected him. But all the anger had died out of his face.

"Thank God," he said. "Now go quickly and tell Virginia."

"I will go," said I, "as fast as your automobile can carry me."

"There's no need of that," he answered. "She's here."

CHAPTER XXVIII

A NIGHT IN JUNE

IT was with a mingled feeling of joy and most poignant remorse that I caught my first glimpse of her there in the morning room. I had entered the room softly and saw her face before she caught sight of mine—her dear, brave, pale, beautiful face, with grief-haunted eyes and tight-pressed lips.

She heard when I closed the door behind me, and turned and looked, and was transfigured. A sudden sense of my own unworthiness to have caused a grief like that, or such a joy, blinded my own eyes with sudden tears.

Dr. Linol was standing beside her. I walked swiftly across the room and shook his hand gravely, without a word. He tried to stammer out something, but failed to command his voice, and turned abruptly and left the room.

I slipped my arm around Virginia's waist, opened one of the great French windows, and led her out upon the moonlit terrace to a great stone

bench that stood near by. She was trembling uncontrollably.

"Virginia, dearest, I have come back."

Since the moment when the doctor had told me that she was in the chateau, I had been thinking how I should tell her of my miracle. But these words were the product of no such thought. They came spontaneously, and it seemed they were enough.

"You have come back to Christopher Morton, I know," she said unsteadily. "I saw that when you shook hands with Dr. Linol. But have you also come back to—to——"

"Morton Smith? Yes, to him, Virginia, and to you."

Her eyes clouded a little, and I saw she was struggling with a question she found it hard to ask.

"Were you Christopher Morton all the while that you pretended to be the other man—the man I learned to know and love—the man I married?"

"Yes," said I. "And that, Virginia, is the one great thing you have to forgive."

She buried her face in her hands, and for a moment her body was shaken with sobs. But presently she recovered herself and looked up at me. She held out her hands—both hands: "Of course I forgive you," she said; "indeed, between you and

me there could hardly be a question of forgiveness. But, oh, if—if only you had trusted me!"

"It wasn't that," I said quickly. "When you hear the story you will know it wasn't that. Will you listen to it now, Virginia?"

Up to now I had been standing before her. Now she moved her skirts a little to make room for me beside her on the bench. "Sit down," she said; "sit here beside me, close, and tell me."

"Three years ago," I began, "three years ago this very month I was, so far as I knew, just exactly the man that Dr. Linol and all my friends believed me to be—spoiled, idle, fastidious, likable, and affectionate to all my friends, and supremely indifferent to everybody else. I had no other ambition than to enjoy the inheritance, which I knew would one day come to me, to the full—to live my life out as I had begun it. According to the standards of my class, I was a right-minded enough young man. Compared to my cousin Arthur, I was quite a model of deportment and rectitude. But no sort of idea ever entered my head that my father's work, his fortune, and his great career imposed any obligation on me.

"As Dr. Linol has told you, I was planning an extended trip into the interior of Africa, nominally

in search of big game. Really what I hoped for was something that would provide me with a new sensation. I was getting bored—tired of luxury and silly society, and my mother's death had deprived me of the only companionship I had ever really enjoyed. So some such alternative as that expedition was the only thing that occurred to me.

"I was on the very eve of starting. I had taken leave of my friends in the neighborhood at a dinner at Tours. I was driving back to la Mesle, in a rather complacent frame of mind, enjoying the fine June night—a night like this—enjoying my cigarette and the comfort of my carriage, which was rolling smoothly along across the great Tours bridge.

"Halfway across the bridge I saw a man leaning against the parapet. As my carriage came opposite him, he cast a quick look around, and as quickly looked away again. He was a man I knew—a peasant who had been one my father's stablemen at the chateau. He had been frugal and prosperous in a small way and had left my father's employ to go into business in Tours. The man had known me, as a man in his class can know one in mine, ever since my boyhood. To-night, however, he did not appear to recognize me. I had seen his face as distinctly as he must have seen

mine, and the look in it troubled me. It was half mad with despair.

"When I had driven perhaps a hundred yards beyond where he was standing, I told the coachman to stop, and dismounted and went back toward him. On seeing me approach, he suddenly stripped his coat back from his shoulders, not far enough to slip it off, but just enough to bind his arms, and began scrambling up on the parapet of the bridge. I realized at once what he was trying to do, made a rush toward him and succeeded in catching him before he went over. If I had not been stronger than he, I think he would have taken me with him, for he was absolutely determined to make an end of himself.

"I finally quieted him, however, and got him to talk to me. His story was the old one of ill luck—petty speculation—the investment of the little sum he had left in lottery tickets, which, of course, had drawn blank, and he was threatened now with absolute ruin. He had a wife and children. To my remonstrances he paid very little attention, but he said one thing that struck me most forcibly:

"'What are you, you rich, that you should interfere with us? You don't play our game.'

"At my request he told me what he meant. He meant that a man like me didn't take a fair sport-

ing chance with life; that he played, as it were, with stacked cards, and he told me bluntly that if I stood where he did, stripped of the aids which my money and position gave me, I couldn't last two years.

"What really developed the irony of the situation between us came out when I asked him how much it would require to pay his debts and put him on his feet again. The sum he named was two thousand francs, and I had more than that at that moment in my pocket. I had won more than that that very evening in a rather stupid game of bridge. When I thought that for the lack of a sum that to my extravagant notion in those days was hardly more than a decent amount of loose change for a gentleman to carry in his pockets—for the lack of a sum like that a man had seriously contemplated destroying himself, I somehow seemed to feel all the foundations of my own world—all my belief in the validity of its standards—slip away from under me.

"The upshot of the interview was that I and my friend struck a bargain. He was to take two thousand francs and go back to the life he had determined to quit; and I, on my part, was to start out, penniless, and without the support which my name and position gave me, and live for two years by my own exertions. The thing wasn't prac-

ticable in France, and I decided to emigrate to America, the place where it suddenly occurred to me I really belonged.

"As soon as I could earn money enough—and you shall hear some day how I did it—to purchase a steerage passage, I put that resolve into execution. Virginia, the man you found there was not a masquerader. If I went to Cleveport for no better reason than that I regarded my bargain with the man on the bridge as a good sporting proposition, that was not why I stayed. The ideals, hopes, ambitions that I confided to you were genuine. The man you knew—Morton Smith—was a real man—a man far more real than the idle young aristocrat, Christopher Morton, had ever been.

"I had the power, of course, to make my dreams come true, but I meant to carry out the terms of my bargain first. They are fulfilled now to the letter. And now, please God, together we can begin making the dreams come true."

Virginia's eyes were shining with excitement. "It seems like the ending of a fairy tale. But, oh —if I had only known," she concluded.

"I am coming to that," said I. "Remember that until I came to Cleveport I had been an idle young man of good position, destined to be very rich, and I had been horribly spoiled, as such young men are. I had made friends who liked me just

for myself, no doubt; but every little while something would happen to make me doubt whether any of the friendship and affection I seemed to command was for me, or for my clothes, my circumstances. And, Virginia, dear, you can hardly imagine what it meant to me, in my shabby little corner down there at Cleveport, to find that I—I, myself—was able to command your interest and your liking, and then your love. It was not a test of you, dear; it was a test of myself. You didn't patronize me, you didn't pity me, and—I wonder if you can realize how much this means—I honestly believe, Virginia, that I should have asked you to marry me just the same if I had been plain Morton Smith and nothing else, with no possibility of turning into anything else.

"I was a coward not to tell you before we were married. We could have gone on—you and I—carrying out my bargain just the same, but we were so supremely happy, always, when we were together that I could never muster courage to tell you something that I feared might make a difference. I was going to tell you that day—our wedding day—and again my cowardice prevailed, and I put it off a little longer. It was too perfect—too absolutely perfect as it was—to change.

"As to your father, you will remember that he had told me nothing of his secret, not even what it

was that he was doing. I knew what he was—a great man and a successful man. I knew that he had a close connection, though I didn't know exactly what, with the Morton-Duggleby Company. When I heard that night for the first time of the vile wrong they were trying to do him, my first thought was that I must set that wrong right before I did anything else. I left you very soon after he came in, you remember. I went straight back to New York, went to the Holland House where I had rooms, and took on again the person of Christopher Morton.

"Then I went to the Dugglebys' house. I found the father and son there together. They knew me, of course, and my coming and my announcement that I meant to take up the authority which was mine, under my father's will, was a great blow to them. It was a heavier blow when I told them where I had been spending the last two years—how I knew the mills, the furnaces, the hovels, the gaunt poverty, the sacrifices of life, the maiming of souls that were piling up our vast fortune—theirs and mine.

"And in the end, I accused them flatly of the crime they were contemplating against your father, the crime they had already attempted. I remember young Duggleby making a savage spring at my throat, and that is the last thing I remember until

I came to myself sitting on a bench in the sun at Dr. Berry's asylum.

"There is the end of my story, Virginia. Am I, indeed, forgiven?"

She did not speak, but I had my answer for all that.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE LAST CARD

IT may have been an hour later, and that was very late indeed, lacking only a little of dawn, and the chill of the outdoor air had driven us to retreat into the morning room, when we heard a discreet tap at the door.

"Trust the doctor for tact," said I. "Any other man would have walked right in."

Virginia laughed, laid a caressing finger on my lips, and rose to admit him.

The doctor's face was very pale and his eyes were grave. I knew the reason well enough. They had been peering, those thoughtful eyes of his, down into the shadows of the valley of death, the valley which, however often he might approach it in company with the pilgrims whose way lay thither, must always remain a mystery to him until he should turn pilgrim himself.

But he looked earnestly into Virginia's face, and then down into mine; and presently he smiled. Evidently our faces told our story plainly enough.

"My dear," said he, holding out his hand to Virginia, "I think you are going to be very happy. I shall require you to ask my forgiveness, but it is granted already before it is asked."

"Your forgiveness, monsieur?" she asked, a little puzzled.

"For destroying, so that he is as if he had never been, my latest godchild—the young man—the enigmatical young man—with whose mystery I had hoped to comfort my declining years. I refer to the late Monsieur Simon Barras."

"Are you really so very sorry?" she asked.

"Oh, so far as Christopher Morton is concerned," said he, "I am entirely and rather ridiculously happy. I am glad to turn him over to you—a perfectly normal, everyday young man. Mad, indeed, but with the only sort of madness that has no interest for the alienist. The sort of madness called 'love,' mademoiselle." Then he sighed: "But my one ewe lamb," he concluded, "the only enigma which I could hope would permanently baffle me, him I shall always regret."

"Well," said I, "we will do what we can to make up to you for his loss."

Both of us could see that he had something to tell me, something he hesitated to speak of in Virginia's presence, and presently she made a pretext for leaving us.

"How are your nerves?" he asked. "Are you equal to a rather trying interview?"

"I am equal to anything," said I. "What is it?"

"It is our friend Duggleby," he said gravely.

"Duggleby!" I exclaimed. "I thought—I thought he was dead."

"It comes to that," said the doctor. "He shot himself through the body. He will live perhaps three or four hours. He is a very wonderful young man. He has already written, with his own hand, a letter to his father. Now he wants very much to talk with you. The end may come with him at any moment. If you are ready, let us go at once."

Much as I dreaded the interview that lay before us, common humanity forbade any hesitation. I accompanied the doctor to the room where he lay. It was hard to believe that the young man I saw lying there, still fully dressed, upon the couch, was within a few hours, at the most, of death. There was no trace of pain in his face, nor in his easy, and, I almost said, lounging attitude. To make the illusion complete, he was smoking a cigarette.

He smiled at me when he saw me come in with the doctor. He smiled again, with a whimsical, almost impish, humor as he nodded me to a chair.

"Turn about; that's fair play, isn't it?" he said.

In contrast with his coolness, I was so moved that I found it difficult to command my voice. "I am sorry," I said at last.

Then, noting the politely skeptical lift to his eyebrows with which he answered, I gathered myself together. "Oh, not that the wheel turned about," said I, "I don't pretend to that; but I am sorry that 'up' with me had to mean 'down' with you. I believe that with a little better luck, we might have been friends instead of enemies."

"Yes," he said, "I am inclined to think we might. I am sorry for that, too. But please don't think," he went on—and I saw the same mocking lift to his brows that I had remarked before—"please don't think that I have brought you here to harry you with a death-bed repentance. I am not repentant a bit. If I had the hand to play over again, I should play it in the same way."

"It must have been a rather grim-looking set of cards that made up that hand," I answered, falling in with his humor as well as I could.

"Yes," he said, "it was; there can be no doubt of that." After a little silence, he went on: "I have a feeling that I want to tell you what those cards were. I saw you were puzzled to-night. I think when I tell you, you will understand."

The doctor had withdrawn to the other end of

the room. I pulled my chair up close to the couch where he was lying.

"Oh, I can be rather brief about it," he said. "To begin at the beginning, I had always hated the thought of you. I imagined you to be a vacuous little French expatriate, with *eau de cologne* in your veins instead of real blood. I never had any occasion to change that estimate until you came to see my father and me that night in the library.

"I had always considered myself, on the contrary, a pretty good sort of person. I was not an altruist; I had not any dreams of making everybody happy; I didn't, and don't at this moment believe that it can be done. The only happiness in this world consists in seeing that we are better off than somebody else. There isn't any such thing as pleasure, except in contrast to pain; nor goodness, except as it has a background of badness to set it off. Perhaps I should not have made a world like that if I were Almighty God. As it stands, I have never seen how I could change it. A few people who can struggle up out of the mire of misery are happy just because the mire is there."

He interrupted himself with a short laugh: "I didn't think I should take to the pulpit at the last moment," he said. "It is vilely unfair of me to preach you a sermon. Light one of those cigarettes on the table, won't you, and let it pass.

"I said I had always considered myself a decent sort of chap, but I knew I had one rather dangerous fault, and a curiously crude, elemental one at that. Ever since I can remember, I have been liable to sudden bursts of rage. Every now and then, a comparatively small thing—a ridiculously inadequate thing sometimes—would put me quite beside myself. I have knocked a man down for merely laying his hand on my arm—all in a flash, and before I fairly knew what had happened. It had got me into trouble a good many times, and I had always taken my medicine and made what reparation I could. Outside of that, I was a decent, well-meaning, hard-working sort of chap, whom my friends found agreeable."

He sighed a little, and there was a moment's silence before he went on: "Oh, it is not especially easy to tell the rest of it. The night you came to our house and made your speech about conditions as you found them at our plant—I had to regard it as ours, not yours, you will understand that, I think—I was angry, rebellious. I felt that Fate had played us a scurvy trick in giving you the power to assume authority over our heads—mine and father's. But the thing you had done, the way you got your knowledge, compelled a genuine, though grudging, admiration. I give you my word that up to the moment when you accused us of

attempting a crime against old Mr. Heatherfield, I had no thought but of accepting the situation with the best grace possible. When you made that accusation, I believed it utterly and preposterously untrue, and in that belief one of my sudden rages swept over me.

"I sprang upon you, not knowing what I was doing. You were totally unprepared, and under my rush you toppled over backward, striking your head against the corner of a table as you fell. When I saw you lying there, apparently dead, I came to myself. I straightened up and turned to my father, expecting his reproaches, ready to take the consequences for the violent thing I had done. But the look I saw in his face—and that, if it does not sound theatrical to say, was the tragic moment in my life—the look I saw there was one of fright, and yet it was furtive.

"I will spare myself, if you don't mind, the details of the conversation that passed between us. The upshot of it was that my father confessed that your accusation was true; that he had instigated the robbery of Mr. Heatherfield's laboratory; that he had got the old man's preliminary processes, and had meant to get his immensely valuable discovery for nothing. For nothing dearer than the knowledge that he himself was a thief.

" All that while you lay there on the floor, apparently dead. In that moment I took my decision. It may not have been the one you would have taken in similar circumstances, but at least you will understand how I came to take it. I said to my father: ' Here we stand a pair of criminals. You're a thief and I'm a murderer, but at least we can act like men and not like a pair of whipped curs. We are criminals. Well, let's play it out. Let's take our medicine. And, by God, let's give them a run for their money! '

" And that is what we have tried to do. We found you were not dead, and we resolved that for all practical purposes you should be. I happened to know Dr. Berry—as arrant a knave as ever lived in the world, plying his nefarious trade—and we packed you off to him, with infinite precaution and infinite secrecy. He thought it probable that you would never recover even your wits, but he understood our wishes thoroughly.

" When he found that with your recovered consciousness you had not recovered your memory, the thing seemed comparatively easy, though if you had recovered your memory when you were in our power, our course would have been the same. We should have had to use more drastic measures—that would have been the only difference.

"And then that scapegrace cousin of yours turned up, very seedy indeed, since his allowance had stopped with your father's death, and he was just the man for our purposes. He looked enough like you to pass with a casual stranger. He knew enough about you to answer questions. So, to fill up a vacuum which your disappearance would have otherwise caused, we sent him abroad to impersonate you."

He paused there, and tossed away his cigarette. "The rest of it," he said, "you know as well as I do."

"Well," said I, "I am glad you told me. I think I shall regret all my life that we couldn't have been friends; that the fortune of the game compelled you to be my enemy."

"Just this much more," he said presently. "You may not find it easy to believe, but the first happy moment I had after that night in the library, was when I got word that you had escaped. Life had got pretty nearly intolerable for me then. The thing was too easy. Our success was too complete. I wanted to fight, not to sit around and grow rich and respectable. When I heard you had got away from Dr. Berry, I was within a day or two of shooting myself. That news changed the whole face of things for me. I had something to do! Something almost impossible to do! Something

that was, if you will allow it, a good sporting proposition, and I honestly enjoyed it. Enjoyed the risks, the crimes, the growing certainty of disaster ahead of me. I enjoyed it until to-night, until I had you penned in that corner, and sent my man away so that I could kill you. And at that—well, I saw by your face you understood!

"I would have told you this story then if I had had time, but that would not have been playing the game, and I meant to play the game out to the last card. Thank God, Morton, it's played! It's over."

He drew a long breath, and lighted another cigarette. "Thank you for coming down to listen," he said quietly. "I won't detain you any longer. I can't detain myself much longer, I fancy. Good-by."

I could not speak, but I went over to him and held out my hand. The same cynical little flash that I had seen there before came into his face. "Well," he said, "that's rather an odd thing to do, but, by the Lord, man, I think you mean it!" With those words his hand met mine.

I think as long as I live the story of his tragedy will haunt me. It is a curious paradox that this man, who would have murdered me in cold blood, whose sole deliberate purpose to the end of his life was to crush me, thwart me, deprive me not only

of my inheritance but of my very self—the figure of this man, who took up the cards Fate dealt him to play, and played them out to the last with so grim a courage—that figure remains in my memory as a friend and not an enemy.

CHAPTER XXX

"MY ALL-THE-WORLD"

IT was at the suggestion of Dr. de Villiers—no, suggestion will hardly stretch to cover the case—at his earnest, insistent request that I set about the task of completing the record of the search for myself, the record which I began in momentary intervals of leisure while I was playing the piano in Mike Lynch's saloon at Coney Island. I had begun it in the fear that an obliterating hand might again be laid upon my memory; that the small, pitiful progress which I made on the road to my discovery during those first days might be undone.

No such fear as that prompted the doctor's suggestion that I conclude the work. "You are to understand," he explained, "that you are a perfectly normal man again, and unless some other enemy taps you on the head, you are likely to remain so. But, being normal, you will begin forgetting just about the same percentage of the past that the normal man forgets. A year from now, the events of this past month will be little more

than a dream to you, forgotten all the faster because of the unusual nature of them. You will be incapable of accounting for such acts as you do remember, and the task of tracing out those extremely interesting and curious mental processes and confusions of yours will be utterly beyond your powers. Yet it is a record which, if clearly and copiously made, would be of inestimable value. So waste no time setting about it, my friend."

I should have been loath to take up the task had not the doctor let me see how highly he would prize the result of it; how eagerly he wanted the story, told from my point of view, of the events which he already knew so well from his own. His interest in it, of course, was purely scientific, but I am afraid that for his purposes he will find it treated in too highly romantic a manner. Well, that is distinctly not my fault.

We are here at la Mesle, Virginia and I, alone together, living out our honeymoon which Fate deprived us of before. Mr. Heatherfield and the doctor are jogging about Europe, doing our traveling for us, leaving to us the sweet solitude and peace of this dear old home of mine.

Our future is bound to be crowded with activities. Cleveport is there—horrible, gaunt, squalid as ever—for us to remake into a place for human habitation, a place where men and women and

children may live real lives. That is a task which both of us are eager to assume.

But before that happens we are stealing these delicious days of pure golden, unalloyed delight. The doctor says we have earned them, and I think that is true.

This record is done. It has been my only occupation during the past weeks, and now, for the remaining days, I mean to have no occupation at all, except—well, except making love to Virginia.

Strangely enough, that miraculous change of mine, which came when the tiny spring under my finger yielded and opened the sliding door for me, that change has miraculously left another change unwrought. This is something about my feeling toward Virginia. There is still, whenever I see her, the same poignant, exquisite, and only half-believed realization that she is really mine. The returning flood of all the memory of my past brought with it no commonplace acceptance of her—of this girl who had married me more than a year ago—as a possession to be taken for granted.

She is still the half-unknown wonder of delight to me that she was to Simon Barras. Whether this is due, in part, to the temporary suspension of my self-conscious identity, or whether the miracle of it resides wholly in her, I do not know. And certainly it does not very greatly matter. All I know

is that her white hands have to-day, for me, the same quickening thrill that they had when they locked so softly into mine that night in the inn at Mettray; and that the look I sometimes see in her eyes can suddenly blur my vision with unshed tears.

I saw her just this moment through the windows of the morning room which open on the terrace. She was crossing it toward the lawn where the white peafowl are, and the sight of her made my heart leap, just as it had leaped when I found her there in the dawn after my interview with Duggleby.

She had greeted me then without a word, with just an outstretched hand, and we had set out together down the path under the beeches.

The dew lay thick upon the grass, and the air, though cool, was intoxicating in its sweet perfume. The limpid sky was aflush with the morning.

Presently we stopped and looked back at the chateau. Its gray walls were tinted faintly, with the rose color of the dawn.

"It's home, Virginia—your home and mine."

Her cheeks flushed then, as if all the glory of the morning were reflected there. She withdrew her hand then, and clasped the two together, as if they were trembling.

"You are glad?" I asked.

"Yes—glad," she answered, not very steadily,

"but—but a little afraid. Are you sure—you with another name than the one I called you by—are you sure, now all the past has come back, that you love me as well as—" then she smiled—"as Simon Barras loved me yesterday?"

"Just as well," I told her, "and in just the same way. I am still your lover, Virginia—just your lover, and—and I, too, am a little afraid."

"As if," she questioned, "as if it couldn't quite be true? As if it might be nothing but a fairy tale?"

I nodded, for I could not speak.

And then she stretched out her arms again, and clasped her hands behind my head.

"Yes, it's true," she said. "You are my husband, and here—here, wherever you are, is my home. Come, shall we go in?"

Here, M. de Villiers, is the task completed that you set for me. Virginia has been waiting all the morning for me to finish. I think she is still there on the lawn where the white peafowl are. I am going to see.

THE END (4)

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